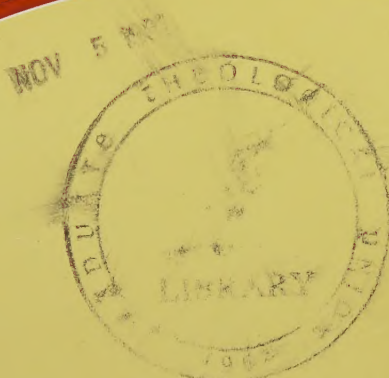


VOLUME THREE • NUMBER THREE • FALL 1982

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**The Jesuit Educational
Center for Human Development**



Growing Older Gracefully

Empathy is at the Heart of Love

Evaluating Community Interaction

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GROWING OLDER GRACEFULLY

JOHN CARROLL FUTRELL, S.J.

The expanding literature on middle-age crisis, aging, dying, and death reflects a conscientization of the life-death process that reaches even the young in contemporary culture. Many of the current articles in publications such as *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* and a growing number of books provide valuable insights from psychological, sociological, and anthropological points of view. A few writers such as Gerald O'Collins, S.J., have offered fruitful spiritual considerations. In this article I propose to reflect on moving toward old age and death as the human experience used by the Holy Spirit as the instrument of passive purification—the “Dark Night”—for persons called to lives of apostolic ministry. My reflections are drawn from my own experience as well as those shared with me by friends. In 1951 I read in *La Vie Spirituelle* a very provocative article, by Louis Lochet, that gave me a conceptual framework for reflecting on the experience of moving through the life cycles. I continue to draw heavily on Lochet's wisdom here.

ALL NEED PURIFICATION

One source of frequent anxiety in apostolic persons is a gnawing feeling of having a “second-class” vocation. Pious books for generations suggested that the highest vocation was that of pure contemplation. Even today in reaction against the secularism and activism of the late sixties, some persons yearn to move entirely into prayer as the privileged means to find God. The current popularity of the writings of St. John of the Cross has led some people to feel that only contemplatives move through dark nights to mystical union with God. The fact is that *all* persons are called by God to be filled with his presence so that passive purification is required by all. The dark nights and the “mystical marriage” of any person are shaped by each one's christian vocation—lay or religious, priest or married, contemplative or apos-

tolic. The underlying dynamics of the process of being hollowed out to be filled by the presence of God are the same for all.

All persons are called to holiness, which means living love perfectly. This involves being possessed by the Father through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, and living their own life of love in our love for all people. To grow in holiness is to grow in love. It is vital, therefore, that we understand the intrinsic dynamics of ongoing growth in love. St. John of the Cross shows that the contemplative matures in holiness through the normal development of the contemplative life toward total self-giving, which is perfect love. Freud describes development in love as gradual growth in “oblativ” love—totally self-giving love. John Paul II, in his apostolic exhortation on *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, points out that self-giving love constitutes the very meaning of human sexuality. Love, then, including its sexual form, moves by its own inner dynamism toward purification of self-seeking, until it finally becomes total self-giving.

VOCATIONS PURIFY DIFFERENTLY

For persons called to the contemplative life, this purification comes through the experience of the mystical nights. Here, the emptiness accepted in love leads to total giving of oneself to God and, at last, to possession of God as All in all. Married couples gradually let go of self-seeking love through the passive purifications of living the demands of their vocation, until their relationship becomes one of total mutual self-giving and openness to God together.

People called to apostolic vocations are called to growth in holiness through apostolic love, self-giving in *action*. Growth in apostolic love, therefore, would appear to entail constant increase of selfless ministry to other people. Such a require-

ment would place an insuperable obstacle to ongoing growth in apostolic love. As the years of apostolic service pass, the apostle evolves biologically and psychologically in such a way that as desire to serve increases, strength for ministry decreases.

One cannot maintain for a lifetime the energy and enthusiasm of a twenty-year-old. This experience of decline can lead a person to feel that growth in apostolic love is an impossible ideal because of the cruel fate of growing older. During middle age, when the limits of one's own forces become painfully clear and personal decline begins, confusion between human possibilities and gifts of God can lead to abandonment of one's ideal along with an ending of one's dreams. One is tempted to give way to discouragement that can ruin one as an apostle. The person is confronted by the painful paradox of God's call to continual growth in holiness precisely as an apostle and of the brutal fact of progressive decline of energies for apostolic action.

The solution can only be that a purification of apostolic love is effected by the very experience of diminishment of human forces for apostolic ministry. By passing through the decline of ability to work, the apostle gradually is purified of hidden, self-centered motives for service, until at last, one surrenders completely to God and, filled with him, becomes the instrument of his saving of all people. At last, apostolic persons will come to perceive their own deaths as their greatest apostolic achievement. The solution to the apostolic paradox, thus, can be found only in a faith view of the meaning of all apostolic work from its very beginning. Through faith we come to understand true growth in apostolic holiness. It is in accepting this growth in faith that we discover it and experience it.

APOSTOLIC LIFE STAGES

To clarify the process of passive purification and growth in apostolic holiness, it is helpful to reflect on the progressive stages of the life of the apostle. Locket suggested that these could be conveniently divided into four: the adolescent, the young apostle, the adult, the old apostle.

The Adolescent. During this period one makes the choice to commit oneself to an apostolic vocation. The apostolic ideal is dreamed about for a long time and finally consented to. Great projects are anticipated that will lead to a future of great apostolic success. With romantic imagination you dream of what you want to do and what you should become. This sketch of the future forms your personality. The privilege of adolescence is to be able to perceive your possibilities without yet being forced to choose among them. Because concrete circumstances do not yet narrowly determine a person, you can conceive of yourself perfectly in the future you fashion in your dreams. Difficulties are imagined, but they need not be faced, since they are not yet there. The apostolic future glows. This is

why adolescents are so severe in judgment of their elders. They cannot help it because, inevitably, they compare their ideals with what their elders have realized—sometimes they burst out, "Get out of my way, and I'll convert the world!"

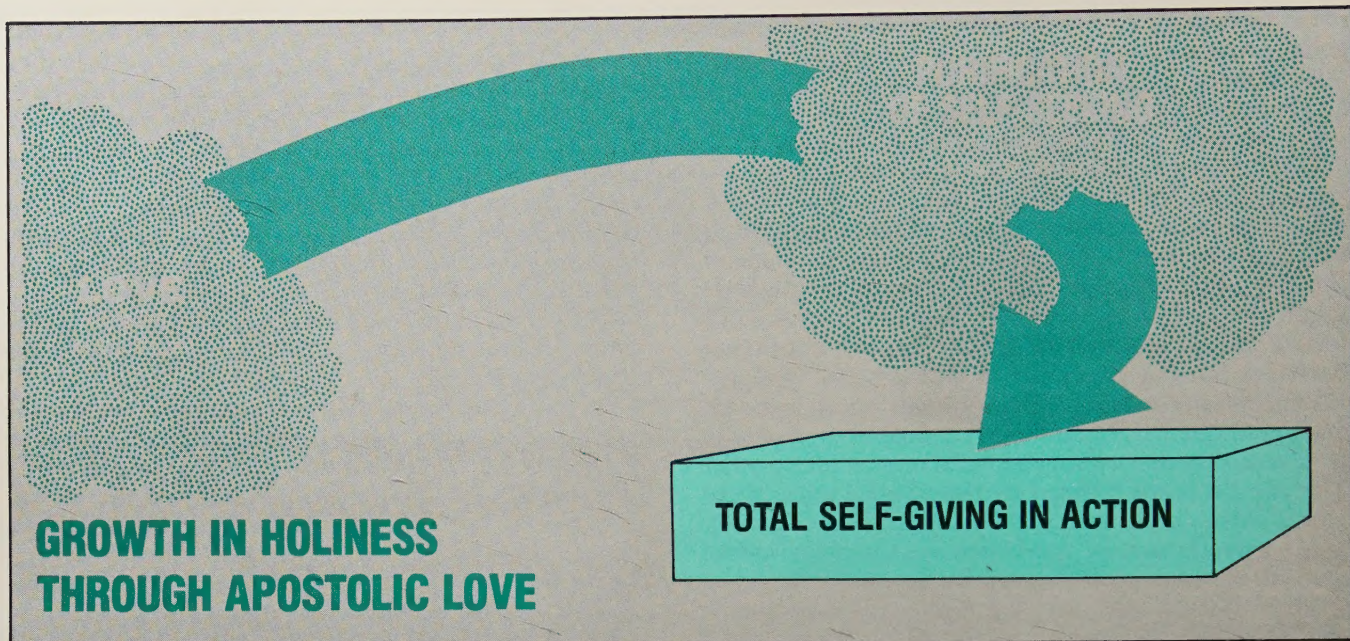
Nevertheless, elders must not stifle the adolescent apostle. This is the period of the greatest enthusiasms, and we must not mock it, for it is a law of human development that these enthusiasms provide the basis for the commitment of the mature apostle. For a long time we dream our apostolic life while it slowly matures, until we finally consent to it definitively.

The Young Apostle. Movement from the age of adolescence to the age of the young apostle is a true step forward. The dreamed ideal is now consented to in reality as *commitment* to real apostolic action. The rhythm of one's psychological life is experienced, now, as that of will rather than of feeling. Leaping from dream to dream is replaced by response to the demands of regular and ordinary daily ministry. Psychic energy used in the past to imagine splendid projects must now be devoted to realizing humble tasks.

The entry into the time of realization is a trial for the apostle. In the light of faith, we come to see that this change of situation is growth. Here love grows. The life of apostolic ministry begins in earnest as lived obedience to the Father, as we face the real difficulties of actual service. We see gradually that what we are seeking ultimately in apostolic service is not a plan of personal ambition, but the plan of carrying out the will of the Father, which was the total plan of the saving mission of Jesus Christ.

This situation of the young apostle is transitory, and sensing this, we are in a hurry to reach adulthood and the full realization of who we are called to be. Through all the difficulties of this stage, our original ideal remains. It will simply take longer to fulfill than we had thought at first, but it sustains our efforts and helps us overcome difficulties as we stretch toward the achievement of this great desire we have felt since adolescence and have never denied. The successes enjoyed during this stage are signs of greater successes yet to come, whereas failures in works not totally absorbing us provide experiences for better future work, which they never completely compromise. The young apostle still has full strength. The ideal has been made more concrete through contact with reality. Experiences and efforts have marked out one's possibilities, indicating one's own path to apostolic success. The young apostle is now ready to commit self totally with all one's accumulated riches, one's mature being, to an apostolic enterprise—to *my* work, the work of my life, and the fulfillment of my apostolic ideal. The young apostle now feels capable of leading. She is a woman. He is a man. The apostle is formed.

The Adult. The adult apostle at first feels that life has settled into stability. The shifting emotions and



confusions of goals of adolescence have been replaced by having found one's own way, where love is embodied in active ministry. Difficulties encountered and overcome deepen one's love for God and people. Growth of apostolic love is experienced as ongoing. However, a new crisis is developing gradually. When it finally breaks into consciousness, many apostles find themselves without helpful counselors, fearfully alone. It is a crisis that will lead the apostle either to greater holiness and to transformed apostolic service or to discouragement, which is simply fatal for both prayer and the apostolate. One is faced with quite new and disconcerting perspectives.

CRISIS OF MIDDLE AGE

Crisis now begins with a discovery within one's own self-awareness that is both astonishing and painful. No one has described this discovery more vividly than has the great French poet Charles Péguy in the following two passages, the first from *Clio*:

It is history talking, this man of forty years. We know him, maybe, Péguy—this man of forty years. We perhaps have begun to hear him talked about. He is forty years old; so, he *knows*. The knowledge which no teaching can give, the secret which no method can confide prematurely, the teaching which no school can provide—he *knows*. First of all, he knows *who he is*. But, above all, he knows *that he knows*. For he knows the great secret of every creature, the most universally known secret, which nevertheless has never slipped out. . . . the most universally divulged secret, which from men forty years old is never passed on to men of thirty-seven

or men of thirty-five or men of thirty-three, never passed down to younger men. He knows that one is not happy.

From Péguy's *Victor Hugo*:

Forty years is a merciless age. It won't allow self-deception any longer. It doesn't tell any more fairy tales. It doesn't hide anything. Everything is unveiled. Everything is revealed. Everything is betrayed. Because this is the age when we *become who we are*.

Péguy, we must remember, was a singer of *hope*. In these passages he merely affirms a law of human development, which opens the narrow gate that leads into the mystery of true hope.

The crisis of middle age is just as profound as that of adolescence. The person is at the center of life. Until now, all one's strength has stretched toward the realization of a future project, and this tension has supported efforts and maintained the dynamic equilibrium of psychic life. But, now, one's situation has been made. Brilliant or mediocre, it has been *acquired*, and one cannot see more than modification of details, which will not change the essence of one's life. Psychological characteristics as well as physical ones have become fixed, and definitive successes and failures have marked them permanently. People know of the middle-aged, as they know of the dead, what this person has been.

Young people begin to place one—*me!*—into the older generation, the past. You feel that your whole life has suddenly shifted direction, and before you, for the first time in realized personal awareness, the descent begins that leads to your own death.

From this new height, which dominates both past and future, you see what your life has been and that it has been this irremediably. At times, the disproportion between the goals of adolescence—the long-loved dreams so fervently pursued—and this reality with its limits fixed definitively leaps into sight. Since human strength is powerless to change this discrepancy, to remake a life from scratch, there no longer seems to be anything to polarize the force of life—no future, no project *out there* to sustain effort. You feel that you cannot face your fate. You are tempted to hide this fundamental disillusion from yourself by distractions, which you discover cannot satisfy. This is the great risk of the middle-age crisis: to drown in disillusion, which will surely occur, unless this passage of time and breakdown of human enterprises leads to a breakthrough to a new level of apostolic love, a leap ahead in holiness.

SAME TRIAL FOR ALL

These are dynamics of a crisis familiar to everyone in middle age. For an apostle, however, this crisis is felt precisely as an apostle: you see the painful disproportion between the apostolic ideal originally projected and the results actually obtained. For some, this revelation comes all at once as a brutal shock. For others, it comes slowly through a whole series of experiences, which vary for each individual person as does life itself but which finally lead to the same trial for everyone. First of all, it is a trial of one's personal life with God, as you see that the first fervor of dreams of easy holiness have given way to the realization that you are a sinner more conscious everyday of the need to be saved. It is also a trial of the life of apostolic service, as you find the ideal that you began with has been amputated by life. Your original ambition of wide effectiveness, of conversion of persons and institutions, has been turned back by the weight of the world and of time and of matter and by the resistance of malice and weakness, both in other people and in yourself.

Thus, persons who began the life of commitment to apostolic service with such great fervor find themselves now disconcerted by events, disappointed by people, disillusioned with themselves, strangely wretched, and alone. Despite everything, as we shall see, this need not lead to pessimism. It reveals a law, however: the more the life of the apostle passes, the more apostolic results appear in their precise dimensions, which, however great, are always limited, whereas the desire for apostolic service becomes more and more vibrant and unlimited. The apostle is progressively forced to experience the painful contrast between apostolic desires and results. You realize that you are not up to doing what you want to do. The heart of the apostle is always wider than all of one's actions. Vincent de Paul on his deathbed, where a person tells the

The apostle is progressively forced to experience the painful contrast between apostolic desires and results

truth, said quite sincerely that he felt that he had done nothing.

The Old Apostle. Time passes, and the apostle moves finally from the stage of middle age into that of final decline. One becomes old. Activities are curtailed one after the other. Gradually one must reduce the field of action, resign from functions, see oneself replaced by younger people. Perhaps most painfully, one must accept the displacement of one's own ideas and methods by newer and more relevant approaches. Now, the problem of growth in apostolic holiness is confronted most acutely: is it simply inevitable to renounce being an apostle? to feel more and more diminished and useless? to discover that growth in *apostolic* love is impossible? Humanly, it seems that the only possible answer to these questions would be, "Yes, it is inevitable."

Through faith, we must try to discover a new center, where the apostle's life through the very diminishing of life and action grows progressively toward a new form of apostolic service, a new form of communication of divine life and love. We need a new perspective to enable us to break through this impasse. We need to see how apostolic service can continue through the spiritual crises of middle age and old age, not by consenting to diminishment, but by accepting passive purification of apostolic love, the dark night of the apostle.

GROWING OLDER WITH GRACE

Passage from adolescent to young apostle to adult to old apostle is not an evolution that bogs us down despite ourselves. Within this very move-

ment, the person is invited to make more and more profound choices, which remain perfectly free. The life of growth is a vast drama where, through the working of biological and psychological laws, grace and freedom are always in play. The evolution of human life is a trial, a sometimes bitter one, but this evolution can produce growth in love, leading up the narrow road to the fullness of life, of apostolic service, and of holiness.

An apostle can react to the crisis of aging simply with sad resignation, seeking nothing better, because nothing better is possible. If one has received applause and recognition, one can be fooled into permanent euphoria, self-satisfaction, or exaggeration of importance, which ends in tragicomic denial of reality and pitiful clinging to illusion. Apostles who retain limitless desires for service, after being forced to recognize the narrow limits of concrete possibility, suffer terribly, and they are tempted to harbor bitter resentment against superiors, the church, the world, life, themselves, even God, who has not heard their prayers in the way they wanted them heard. At this point, to advance at all, it is necessary to leap abruptly to a new level of insight, to conceive in an entirely new way the meaning of apostolic service. It is necessary to make a real breakthrough—to consent to be passively purified, to consent to the dark night.

STAGES OF PURIFICATION

To be purified, we must consent to the light. The first step in purification is to allow the Holy Spirit to convince us of sin: to enable us to confess that the apostolic desires that have inspired us to service came from God and from our selfish selves at the same time. The light of the Holy Spirit reveals the self-love in our apostolic action, a leaven of self-seeking that can falsify our relations with God and with other people. This self-seeking puts a barrier between us and God. We cannot find God fully until we have left this barrier behind us once and for all. To the same degree, this same barrier separates us from other people. Any apostle who is self-seeking becomes incapable of opening the self truly to other people to welcome and serve them. We can all remember concrete proof of this limitation in our own lives of apostolic service, which is why God our Father enters in to purify us, to prune the vine. The action of his divine providence, his active love in history, inexorably cuts away the barriers of self-seeking, all for the sake of greater apostolic effectiveness. The action of our Father, using the very circumstances of human life as our own biological and psychological evolution brings us to the crisis of age, confronts us with a new choice.

The choice that we face when we are young is that of committing ourselves to apostolic service. When we are old, it is the choice to consent to be purified. To do this, we must see that what is cut off is selfish plans, vain ambitions, and egoism. Then,

what remains more real than ever before is our surrender to the Father's will, with the certainty in faith that it is a will of love and of personal fulfillment. Finally, we need to renounce the dream in order to keep intact the ideal and to let go of every selfish project in order to give ourselves completely to the plan of the Father. Only profound faith animating our hope and love will enable us to achieve this surpassing of our own interest, so long and so avidly sought.

PASSION MAKES WORKS EFFICACIOUS

Purification demands that we see in the light of faith the effectiveness of all apostolic service in a new way. Only thus shall we be able finally to say "Yes" to the Father, who, through the very despoiling of our projects, fulfills our apostolic desires. By accepting the failure of *our* manner of serving and of saving, we do not let go of our apostolic desires; rather, we integrate them into the plan of the Father. Having remained like the Jews of old with our own plan of triumphant messianism, we must let this plan be broken to discover, like Peter and the Apostles, the plan of the Father and to accept the mystery of the cross. In the light of faith, all finally becomes clear. We come to see that the world is saved not through our success, but through our passion united to the passion of Christ. We see that Jesus' preaching, healing, and doing good during his public life were an anticipation of his passion from which all these actions derived their efficacy. In the same way, the efficacy of all our apostolic activity comes from the beginning, by anticipation, from the efficacy of our own passion united to Christ's.

We must believe, as Abraham believed, as Mary believed on Calvary, that the Father is powerful, wise, and loving enough to carry out his saving plan beyond failure—beyond *my* failure—and even by means of this failure. We must trust in true christian hope that after all our failures the last word will rest with the divine fidelity. The promise will be accomplished. Our Father will bring life right out of death. Faith enables us to understand finally that the last word of all human apostolic action is precisely to call forth the action of God by the intensity of our hope.

Negative responses to growing old—bitterness, silly euphoria, disillusionment—arise from failure to enter fully into the divine perspective with regard to the value of all apostolic action as an appeal for the intervention of God and also from failure to accept this mystery. Whether we take satisfaction in our own apparent apostolic successes or give way to despair because of apparent apostolic failure, we remain within an exclusively human consideration of apostolic service. We are afraid to surrender to the divine mystery, afraid to believe, afraid to hope. When passive purification brings us to surrender to the plan of the Father, we come to see

that our trials and failures and the passing stages of our lives lead to greater apostolic love and effectiveness through greater hope.

DARKNESS BRINGS HOPE

Just as in the obscurity of the mystical nights and through the passive purification of faith, the contemplative person at last finds in the very darkness a new and mysterious Presence, so too the aging apostle in the apostolic dark night is hollowed out to be filled with the presence of the Lord, who gives divine life to other people through the apostle. Through passive purification, the apostle grows in hope. We rely less and less on personal resources, efforts, and successes in apostolic service, and we rely more and more on the Lord, until finally we rely uniquely and simply on the power, wisdom, and love of the Father who saves all through Jesus Christ.

Thus, the growing experience of our own powerlessness and poverty need not destroy in any way our apostolic ideal. It is through our littleness that God accomplishes great things. It is in empty nets that he brings in the huge draught of fishes. The purified hope of the apostle is completely apostolic. It waits confidently for the day of the Lord, the transformation of all things in Christ in the *parousia*, when God will be All in all.

Apostolic hope is efficacious. It obtains from God our Father what is sought. This is why the apostle is no longer astonished or disconcerted at facing so much resistance, so many persecutions, and the progressive and painful diminishment of one's own life. All these bring one to a purer hope in God alone; the apostle knows that this hope is the power of all apostolic action from the very beginning. Diminishments are no longer limitations but the means to achieve this goal desired above everything: the saving of all people in Christ. Diminishments and failures are the cross for the apostle, the times we encounter Jesus Christ in the very act of his priesthood, and together with Jesus Christ we save the world. Here the apostle enters literally and locally with Jesus into the paschal mystery. Only in the paschal perspective of faith and in the light of the cross can we solve the painful crisis of growing old and discover the meaning of all apostolic service and of every human life and every human death.

DEATH AS SOURCE OF LIFE

"One who loses one's life will save it." (Matthew 10:39) The true meaning of our lives and of our apostolic service is found only in the paschal mystery of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the light of this faith we can see our own death, with its surrender of all our projects and all our actions, as the fulfillment of our apostolic ideal in a way more wonderful than we ever dreamed. Affirming our

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hope, we consent to the saving plan of the Father, and we enter into bonds of new saving grace with those people whom we love and for whom we have worked. Through our offering, the Father achieves the salvation of those for whom we are sacrificed. Our last failure becomes our most brilliant success, and this last passion becomes the most fruitful of all our apostolic actions and compensates for the weakness of all the others. This death becomes a source of life. Thus, in the final, total despoiling of self, the apostle reaches ultimate apostolic fulfillment and perfect apostolic service because the immensity of that which is obtained at last—and for the first time—responds to the immensity of the initial desire.

All our apostolic action, then, must be as humanly efficacious as we can make it. All comes from us, and all comes from God. All comes from us as preparation; all comes from God as consummation. All comes from us as emptiness and appeal, and all comes from God as response and fulfillment. It is this emptiness, this poverty experienced and consented to, that becomes the hope that calls forth the gift of God. We strive for apostolic success because we know that the Father wants to bring incarnationally the Kingdom to come. Yet when we fail we do not despair because we know that the Father will use the failure as the means. We remain realists conscious of all the deficiencies of our results, but through it all, we retain total hope in the final fulfillment of the Kingdom, and so we feel security and joy that make us capable of undertaking more and more challenging works. Knowing our own weakness, we are afraid of nothing because our hope is in God.

Apostolic action is undertaken in a spirit of trust and hope, which creates an habitual intimacy with God

All apostolic action, therefore, is undertaken in a spirit of offering, trust, and hope, which creates in the apostle habitual intimacy with God. This is the specific mysticism of the apostle: finding God in all things, being a contemplative while performing apostolic service. Our hope is the source of our constantly growing apostolic love because we have been carried by faith beyond merely human perspectives: that of the self-satisfied person who thinks one obtains apostolic results through one's own strength and that of the bitter person who despairs of apostolic success because one's own forces are insufficient. The apostle developing in holiness through continual growth in apostolic love is one rooted absolutely in hope. To grow in apostolic holiness demands the passive purification of being hollowed out.

HOLLOWING FOR HOLINESS

Growth in apostolic holiness is a lifetime process of being hollowed out by the Lord so that his own life of love can fill us with his peace and joy, which will reach other people through us in proportion to the hollowing. The hollowing is for his presence. Only when all barriers of self-seeking and self-love in our lives and in our apostolic service have been let go can we be filled fully with his presence and say with St. Paul: "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me." (Galatians 2:20)

All the elements of the process of aging and of moving toward our own death—the events, circumstances, relationships—which are the instruments of the hollowing, are meant at last to root all of our security entirely in the Lord's love and

fidelity—to allow God to be All in all. He hollows us because his blood cannot fill our cup unless it is empty; his blood alone saves the world. He hollows us because he cannot fill our body unless it is empty, like Mary's womb; only then can he reach other people through us. He hollows us because he cannot fill us with his risen life, peace, and joy unless we are empty, like the tomb; only then can we always live in the Spirit of the risen Jesus and henceforth communicate to all those we meet the message that "Christ is in you!"

A CLOSING PRAYER

The great non-christian poet, Rabindranath Tagore, beautifully expressed the movement of our human lives toward God. I wish to end this reflection by sharing his words:

Time after time I came to your gate with raised
hands,
asking for more and yet more.

You gave and gave,
now in slow measure,
now in sudden excess.

I took some,
and some things I let drop;
some lay heavy on my hands;
some I made into playthings
and broke them when tired;

till the wrecks and the hoard of your gifts grew
immense,
hiding you . . .
and the ceaseless expectation
wore my heart out.

Take, oh, take—has now become my cry.
Shatter all from this beggar's bowl:
put out this lamp of the importunate watcher:
hold my hands,
raise me from the still gathering heap of your
gifts
into the bare infinity of your uncrowded
presence.

Fruit-Gathering, XXVIII

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DEATH THAT GIVES LIFE

JAMES V. GAU, S.J.

When praying in earnest, we might feel the need to transport ourselves into another world to meet the transcendent divinity. Because the divinity is also immanent, we could feel the need to try to sift through our humanity to find the divinity. This polarity, although helpful in emphasizing God as always greater *and* ever present, often becomes a split that depreciates God's gift of himself in creation. A more integrating perspective on God and creation is required. I hope to present such a perspective by reflecting on the word of God in Jesus and on the non-word of God in the silence after the death of Jesus. This reflection has consequences for a life of prayer.

Jesus is the word of God par excellence. He is the complete communication of the Father to us. At his incarnation, the rest of creation had evolved to the point where it could receive its completeness spoken in Jesus. For this, Jesus came: to express in the word of his person the dignity of our persons, since we too are God's word, and to complete our dignity by the gift of himself in his Spirit. The word of God, communicated in the humanity, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is the acceptance of our humanity and death—the fulfillment of life in the

Spirit now and the assurance of life with the Trinity forever. Thus, as we are God's communication in creation and as Jesus lives in us by the power of the Spirit, we are God's word. As Hans Urs von Balthasar has written in *A Theological Anthropology*:

The decisive difference, however, has still not been mentioned, namely, that the salvation event, by means of which human beings achieve a redemptive relationship to God, occurs in history, that God does not set a sign or speak a word to them, but uses them in all their existential doubtfulness and fragility and imperfectibility as the language in which to express the world of redemptive wholeness. God, therefore, uses existence extended in time as the script in which to write for human beings and the world the sign of a supratemporal eternity.

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God's communication to us is our humanity; his speech is the individual person. When an artist creates—Rodin John the Baptist, or Beethoven the Fifth Symphony—he or she does not then write an essay to explain the creation. God creates the world and us in the world and thus the history of the world. All the suffering we experience owing to our creaturely incompleteness—doubtfulness, fragility, imperfectibility—even the suffering owing to our responsible choices, is the word of God, his communication expressing itself in time. As the Lord draws us in the vitality of our human nature from incompleteness to increasing completeness, he speaks the promise of a completeness beyond time. We are, in our movement to eternity, what God has to say.

SILENCE IS COMMUNICATION

God communicates himself to us in the humanity of Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, the word of God became the non-word, the silence following the death of Jesus. God, however, does not cease communicating himself when silence ensues; even the non-word is a communication. The silence and death of God in Jesus is equally the fulfillment of God who lives, speaks, and promises. The silence of the non-word communicates that death is final, that death is inherent to humanity. A dying person can finish as reconciled as anyone could wish, but still he or she must draw the last breath. We know that Jesus rose from the dead, and we live in the hope of his resurrection. We tend, however, to imagine that our rising will be a simple continuation of our lives before our death. The assumption that this continuation is true cancels the threat of death and is a denial that death is real.

The human condition of emptiness and incompleteness evokes needs in us that spur self-transcendence. Our need for survival releases desires for food and shelter; for culture, myth, and music; for communion, friendship, and family. When our wants extend and expand our humanity, they impel us to self-transcendence. The converse, of course, is also true. When our needs are self-centered, they move us to self-destruction.

The silence of death is an invitation to self-transcendence in an ultimate way. Now our emptiness and incompleteness is not so threatening because to some extent we have recent memory of having our emptiness filled and our incompleteness satisfied. What we have needed and wanted has always been there, or we have believed that we had the power to satisfy our longings. We attribute satisfaction, at whatever level, to our worthiness or to our efforts and ignore thanksgiving and the acknowledgment of all as gifts.

So much more abrupt will death be when our efforts do not match the emptiness and silence. Faced with the abruptness of death, we tend to revolt, accuse God of injustice, and posit ourselves as

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superior to God. As we approach the moment of death we have no clear, immediate indication that our emptiness and incompleteness will be filled. Our efforts avail us nothing. We are faced with the task of admitting that our efforts never were responsible in any causative way for the filling of our emptiness and incompleteness. The experience of our helplessness in the face of death could convince us of how much we have received, of our need to be grateful, and could thus be the beginning of a choice for life.

RESURRECTION'S MEANING UNKNOWN

All we have at death is the knowledge that we received gifts in life that allowed us self-transcendence and the faith and hope that on the other side of the silence of death there will be self-transcendence in the resurrection from the dead, though we do not know what this means. The silence of the non-word after the death of Jesus indicates the reality of death and the radical difference of existence after three days in the tomb. The silence of death is indeed silence; the finality of death is indeed final. The non-word, however, does communicate; it communicates that death is real and that we do not know what the resurrection means.

We cannot perceive the glory of God's creation, his love, and thus his divinity manifested in all things, and we cannot live in the present and perceive the luminosity of creation in any real sense unless we have met and experienced to some extent our own death. Peter Matthiessen in *The Snow Leopard*, the story of his trek through the Hima-

layas with a zoologist friend, explains that he carried the Tibetan Book of the Dead with him because it was actually a guide for the living. He says that "it teaches that a man's last thoughts will determine the quality of his reincarnation. Therefore, every moment of life must be lived calmly, mindfully, as if it were the last, to insure that the most is made of the precious human state—the only one in which enlightenment is possible." Although of another dispensation, the Tibetan Book of the Dead, as Matthiessen represents it, affirms that creation becomes luminous and glorious when we meet our death.

The story of the death of Zossima's brother in *The Brothers Karamazov* describes the same experience of life. Zossima's brother, Markel, undoubtedly meant to be compared with Ivan, is sardonic and mocking of religion. He is a young man and very much influenced by an exiled intellectual. At seventeen he contracts consumption and becomes increasingly sick. To please his mother, he goes to Holy Week services and there experiences a conversion of heart. He reverses his former sardonic attitude and becomes tender and loving. With his death imminent, he asserts to his mother that life is glad and joyful, and though we do not see it, life is a paradise. He is filled with gratitude for his friends loving him and the servants caring for him, and he wonders why he did not know and appreciate them before. The vision of reality provoked by the nearness of his death moves him to confess his sinfulness to his mother. He avers the responsibility that all human beings have for one another, and he wonders why they quarrel and hold grudges rather than walking and playing in the garden, rather than loving, appreciating, and glorifying life. He even asks forgiveness of the birds and praises the beauty and the glory of God in the trees, meadows, and skies. Matthiessen and Dostoyevsky reveal that we perceive the glory of God's divinity manifested in the luminosity of his creation when we meet and experience our death.

DIABOLICAL POWER OF DEATH

Closeness to death brings a heightened perception of persons and things, but it does not, in itself, necessarily reveal the glory of God. The experience of death that so heightens our perception can also reveal a beautiful world that withers and dies or is bent on destruction and is therefore absurd. Recently, I talked with a young man who is a Vietnam veteran. He had been meeting with other Vietnam veterans to discuss their experience in hopes of coming to terms with it and integrating it into their lives. He told me that he and all the members of the group had a strong desire to return to Vietnam. Because this man was such a good and wholesome person and because he had suffered so much because of Vietnam, I was stunned. I was amazed to hear that anyone who had escaped the great

negativity and gruesomeness of that war would want to go back. He said that his and his friends' desire to return came from the heightened sense of perception—even ecstasy—that accompanied living on the edge of their existence and came from living so close to their deaths and from the exhilarating power of carrying a weapon that put other human beings also on the edge of their existence. Closeness to death in this case is diabolical because it issues in the absurdity of death that continues in further death, because it cancels the meaning that results from need growing into self-transcendence, and because it annuls faith and hope in the promise of life beyond death.

One kind of facing death issues in the hope, if not the assurance, of further life, in the acceptance of finitude and incompleteness, in receiving all as a gift, in the possibility of affirming others' existence by being one with them in accepting human limitation. A second kind of facing death issues in continuing death, in gambling all to dominate and control all, in seizing and taking all, in the need to preserve existence by establishing superiority through competition, threat, and anxiety. Even if a person is without faith, the first option makes more sense because it improves the quality of life now. However, should those who face death in hope be destroyed by the diabolical power of death, their faith in continuing life may inspire others to the same faith and hope in the meaningfulness of life here and hereafter.

DEATH MET IN SILENT PRAYER

Regular and insistent prayer, over a long period, offers us the possibility of meeting death in faith and hope, thus offering us the possibility of perceiving the luminosity of creation, the love of the divinity manifested in things, which is the glory of God. As God communicates himself in the person, words, and actions of Jesus, so he communicates himself in us, especially as we are his creation and the Spirit of Jesus is in us, and thus in our words and actions. When we express who we most genuinely are, we express, to some extent, who God is. The action of prayer and the words of prayer express who God is. But because God communicates himself in the non-word and silence of the death of Jesus, he also communicates himself in the silence and the non-word of our prayer, as we eventually exhaust our words and thoughts in prayer.

The silence of prayer, which is an experience of our death, is as much a fulfillment as the prayer that speaks, promises, feels, and images. The silence communicates that death is real, final, and inherent to our person. As we meet our death in the silence of prayer, we increasingly know that things can never be the same, though we know not what they will be. Letting the emptiness and incompleteness of the silence of prayer be is as much as we can do to achieve self-transcendence; accepting

Prayer confronts us with the non-word, the silence of our lives— our death— and the promise of eternity

the silence means being attentive to the movement of the Spirit that draws us beyond ourselves into God. This is the point of receptivity. We see more and more that we cannot move into self-transcendence—into being fulfilled and complete—by our own power; thus, we become more conscious of and grateful for what has always been there for us or has come unbidden to satisfy our needs and desires. Thus, on the foundation of the death and resurrection of Jesus as manifested in our prayer, we perceive our lives moving gradually to death and to a new and unknown life.

RESISTING PRAYER MANIFESTS DEATH

We resist prayer because it means facing the non-word, silence and death, and because we must acknowledge our unworthiness and our inability to satisfy our own emptiness and admit the superiority and justice of God. When we are nudged by the Spirit into prayer, whether driving down the expressway or up against the half hour we have set aside, we would rather find other things that have to be done. Or when we have decided to pray, we are beset with the distractions of pressing deadlines, relationships that need straightening, and reports that have to be filed.

Our resistance to prayer is the avoidance of the silence of the non-word, which is our death, and our distractions—really the anxieties of our lives—reflect our daily attempts to preserve our lives by work, by what we do. Our resistance to prayer is really a subliminal manifestation of death that issues in further death, for it means taking gifts for granted and as due to our worthiness and power.

But precisely because prayer means facing our anxieties and the silence of death, it can bring us to the experience of living on the edge of our existence and in time to a heightened perception of persons and things and thus of God who communicates himself in human existence. Prayer also challenges us to investigate whether our needs, as manifested in our desires, are leading us to a self-transcendence that keeps the promise of eternity open, or whether they are leading us to self-destruction because of their inconsistency with the authenticity of our person and thus with our human nature. Prayer, then, confronts us with the non-word, the silence, the solitude, the emptiness, the inadequacy, the incompleteness of our lives—our death—and the promise of eternity.

GOD FOUND THROUGH DEATH IN PRAYER

The experience of our death in prayer, in faith and hope, illuminates creation and reveals God's glory. No longer does "praying always" result in a piercing headache that comes from concentrating on trying to say prayers all day long or in regret or even remorse for having failed to recollect. No longer does "finding God in all things" cause us to peel back imaginatively the layers of creatureliness, like the clothes on cut-out dolls, so that we can see the goodness of people and things. No longer does "contemplation in action" mean skipping prayer time and saying that our work is our prayer. Because in prayer we have an experience of death, we can see ourselves, others, and all things in themselves as the word of God, as his self-revelation and communication.

Evaluating Community Interaction

LUCY MALARKEY, S.H.C.J., DOROTHY J. MARRON, C.S.J.

Religious life has undergone substantial changes since Vatican II. In some instances a community may be hard pressed to recognize itself, comparing its life today with that of twenty to thirty years ago. For many communities, the formality of a highly structured way of life now belongs to history. Each religious family has needed to modernize, to rediscover its original charism in order to inspire its members anew, leading and challenging them to live out the ideals and spirit of its founder. Yet in the midst of this transition it may be difficult for a community to have a clear picture of the stage it has currently reached or even of the goal toward which it is aiming.

One way of gauging where a community is on this journey—of gaining perspective on its evolution—is to consider how the community members relate to one another. Since a community is a group of vowed persons following the inspiration of a given charism, seeking to live the evangelical counsels for the service of others in the church, it is important to see how the interactions of the members help or hinder the attainment of this end. The aim of this paper is to use some principles of family therapy as a perspective from which to view community interactions and to understand some of the usual difficulties encountered in religious life by recognizing certain patterns of human functioning.

THERAPY DESCRIBED

Salvador Minuchin, M.D., director of the Family Therapy Training Center in Philadelphia, is credited with originating what has become known as the structural approach to family therapy. Ac-

cording to his theory, instead of focusing on the individual, the therapist focuses on the person within his or her environment. Primarily, this is the family system. Emphasis is placed on changing the organization of that system. When this happens, the positions of members are altered and each individual's experiences change. Minuchin provides some helpful concepts in placing families according to a structural mode on a functional-dysfunctional continuum. Families near the endpoints—*enmeshed* and *disengaged*—are considered dysfunctional; those nearest the centerpoint, he views as the most functional.

A *functional* family (clear boundaries) is able to utilize information both from within the family and from the nonfamily environment. Such a family is able to adapt when circumstances change without losing the continuity that provides a frame of reference for its members. A family achieves this adaptability partly through the proper functioning of what are known as subsystems. Subsystems are the structures through which a family differentiates (i.e., develops differences) and yet maintains itself as a family. Subsystems can be formed by generation, by sex, by interest, or by function. For example, a mother and child may form a parent-child subsystem, or the children in a family can consti-

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Enmeshed family members are often emotionally fused together, undifferentiated, and overly sensitive to group consensus

tute a sibling subsystem. Each subsystem has particular rules that define who participates in it and how they participate. For proper family functioning the boundaries of the subsystems must be clear. They have to be defined precisely enough to allow subsystem members to carry out their functions without undue interference, but they must allow contact between the members of the subsystem and others.

On one end of Minuchin's continuum of boundary functioning is the enmeshed family. Family members at this extreme utilize cues or information that come primarily from one another. A great deal of agreement on or similarity in the solutions of problems exists, but these solutions are often poor. The members of such a family are often emotionally fused together, undifferentiated, and overly sensitive to the consensus of the family system. In extreme cases, members can become schizophrenic and require hospitalization.

On the opposite end of the continuum is the disengaged family. Members of such families utilize cues or information that come from the environment, but not from one another. Family members are emotionally distant from each other and are interpersonal-distance sensitive. In extreme cases, individuals can become sociopathic and might need institutionalization and even imprisonment.

ENMESHED FAMILY TRAITS

In an enmeshed family there is fusion among the members. The mutuality has become far too strong. When Suzie runs crying into the house after school and goes up to her room, each member of the fam-

ily follows her to see what is wrong. All constantly discuss whatever Suzie's problem might be. The family members are neither strong individuals nor well differentiated and so do not possess a sense of personal identity. It is as if there is only one person—the family. Often there is little or no privacy. No one person has a right to his or her own possessions. A person seems not to even to have a claim to his or her own feelings or ideas. For example, a husband may often interrupt, speaking for his wife and telling her what she thinks or feels. Because each member is so intertwined with the others, the family boundary is said to be tight and rigid, which means an outsider has a very difficult time breaking into the family, and family members have a hard time breaking away. A child may face a formidable struggle in leaving home to go away to college, work, or marriage.

Family events and relationships take precedence over those with peers. The boundaries of the subsystems in the family—marital, parent-child, sibling—are diffuse. Parents do too much for the children. Mother helps Johnny off with his coat at an age when he should be capable of doing it for himself. The parents are overinvolved with each child's activities, choices, and decisions. Frequent calls to "check in" when away from home or making sure that no family activities are planned before making an ordinary personal decision characterize the behavior of children and even the adults in an enmeshed family system. Members of the family are too loyal. A strong overprotectiveness prevails. Everyone denies dad's alcoholism or covers up for older sister's delinquency. Family secrets, myths, and traditions flourish. Conflict is detoured and avoided at all cost. Triangles are formed with two people in and one person out. Father and mother, instead of fighting with each other directly, fight with one another through Johnny. Direct confrontation is nonexistent.

The enmeshed family has rigid rules and fixed patterns of communication. Stress reverberation can be very high. Parental functions become overtaxed, and the parents respond with anger, overcontrol or lack of control, and inappropriate nurturance. This, in turn, increases the children's anxiety, confusion, and anger. Some families are so binding that there is no separation or individuation. Others are delegative families and allow separation for a specific purpose (e.g., "my son, the doctor"). The major aim of these behaviors in enmeshed families is to keep members bound together and fused.

DISENGAGED FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

The disengaged family is characterized by its unpredictability, its seeming impermanence and inconsistency. In deprived classes of society, its presence is understood as being a result of the stressful socioeconomic situation. A single working parent,

CONTINUUM OF BOUNDARY FUNCTIONING

1

**DISENGAGED FAMILY
OR COMMUNITY**

**RIGID
BOUNDARIES**

2

**FUNCTIONAL FAMILY
OR COMMUNITY**

**CLEAR
BOUNDARIES**

3

**ENMESHED FAMILY
OR COMMUNITY**

**DIFFUSE
BOUNDARIES**

usually female, has little time to spend with her children or other family members. Offspring step out on their own and develop a relationship network that often does not include the family. In more affluent families it is the scenario of the mother off to play tennis or bridge, the father engrossed in his job and under the constant pressure of upward mobility, and the children left with either a parental substitute (e.g., a maid) or sent off to boarding school. There is little sense of family identity, although carrying on the family name may assume some importance.

In middle-class America the disengaged family is often characterized by both parents working and coming home tired. Little happens in the way of family activities. Children find companionship in front of the television set or with friends outside the family structure. Meals may be prepared but not eaten together. Outside influences capture family members' time and attention. The attitude at home is "I'd rather be . . ." *anywhere* else—at the local health spa, the golf course, or even at work or school. Parents feel overtaxed and exit from the family system. Children are viewed as a status symbol or a nuisance, not as individual persons to be cherished and loved. Often they are delegated out, and the family structure is physically and/or emotionally abandoned.

Personal boundaries in disengaged families are tight, but the various subsystems' boundaries are so loose that there is no cohesion among members. At its extreme, pathological level, this family fosters development of a personality type called

sociopath, an aggressively antisocial person. Lacking a sense of identity and belonging, a sociopath exists totally for self. All values and decisions are aimed at personal advantage, even at the expense of others' rights.

Family relationships are impersonal, and when problems develop, other members remain detached from them. Ordinary family functions of protection, support, and concern are lacking, and attempts are made to fill these needs outside of the family. An obvious breakdown exists in this type of chaotic home. Communication is practically nonexistent, and outsiders are manipulated to fit personal needs and desires. It would appear that each family member has drawn an unbreakable circle around himself or herself, keeping everyone else out. Doors are closed. Privacy and personal space may not be invaded. Little overt or covert affection is demonstrated. No one feels guilty about not being home because there is nothing happening and no one there anyway.

APPLICATION TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The Minuchin continuum can be applied to religious communities and provide insights into the dynamics of interactions, relationships, and change in religious life and increase our understanding of the multifaceted patterns of community functioning. As with the family, religious communities fall somewhere along the continuum between the extreme endpoints.

In an enmeshed religious community, the mem-

bers gain their sense of identity primarily from the community. Most of their support comes from within. Interchange with anyone outside the community on an interpersonal level is minimal. Members prefer to be with one another. Vacations, holidays, and celebrations find everyone in the community celebrating together. Outsiders are not allowed to mingle freely with the community. Guests may be welcomed warmly and graciously, but there are definite limits on their inclusion and on some occasions guests may be blatantly unwelcome. There is an unspoken sense of "we" and "they." An individual member may feel incomplete when away from the community for an extended period of time, as for study. The members look almost exclusively to one another for emotional, spiritual, and intellectual support.

Such a community tends to be very protective of its members. Regulation extends to one another's inner lives. Members think alike: "We just don't do that . . . We think that . . . We would not want to . . ." Going out of the house may require a companion's presence. Everyone knows what each person is doing, where each is going. There tends to be dependence on the superior and a lack of individuation and differentiation. Two or three members attending the same university for summer school gravitate to each other for all activities. They go to Mass together, take walks in the evening together, arrange to meet in the dining hall, and generally do not mix with other students, lay or religious.

Conflict is avoided. Sister Margaret is annoyed at Sister Patrice and tells the superior, who in turn tells Sister Patrice that "others are saying . . ." Sisters do not confront a difficult member but complain about her to one another or to the provincial during her annual visit to their house. Problems between teachers in school or nurses on a hospital staff are taken to the principal or administrator rather than dealt with directly, person to person. In the name of charity no one tells Brother Joe that he talks too much or bulldozes discussion with his personal opinions at community meetings. Instead, feelings of anger and resentment are buried. Pseudomutual relationships are maintained in which only warm, loving, and supportive feelings are considered acceptable. Neurotic needs are catered to rather than met with efforts at helping persons grow beyond them. People are hypersensitive to nonverbal communication and body language. If Father Kevin doesn't smile at me, he must not like me. In reality, he may be exhausted, preoccupied, sick, or distracted. Individual stress can be high and is often manifested in psychophysiological symptoms such as headaches, insomnia, or gastrointestinal distress.

An enmeshed community suffers from rigidity. Rules and patterns of communication become inflexible. Meals and prayer may be at set times: "We've always done it this way." Prayer may become ritualized in a manner that leaves no room

for variety and creativity. In short, life is structured in an obsessive fashion.

DISENGAGED COMMUNITIES

How does a disengaged community act? Some qualities peculiar to this type of religious living include a total emphasis on the individual at the expense of the community. "I do what I want, when I want, and with whom I want!" Vacations and holidays are spent apart from the community. Weekends find the religious house empty or nearly so. Individual members invite friends over with a frequency that is detrimental to the privacy of the community. A sense of belonging to the community is not felt, and there is very little evidence of desire on the part of the members to be a part of the community physically or emotionally. Community is seen as a necessary encumbrance, for the paying of bills, for security, or just for convenience.

Conflicts in disengaged communities are not handled well. Physical distancing and indifference toward one another leave little opportunity for resolution of problems. The "silent treatment" and withdrawal are typical styles of dealing with anger.

Community life lacks order and regularity. An absence of community responsibility is prevalent. Often no one follows through on taking care of a community need, such as house repairs or car maintenance. Individual jobs are treated casually and not infrequently are left undone. Use of the car and enough money for each member to become independent become the major issues.

DIMENSIONS OF COMMUNITY LIVING

The features of enmeshed, disengaged, and functional communities can be further explored by viewing community in six dimensions. These six views, also drawn from family theory, have been proposed by therapists David Kantor and William Lehr. There are three physical criteria for measuring interaction: (1) the use of space, (2) the use of time, and (3) the use of energy. The three goals, or endpoints, sought after are: (4) emotion or affection, (5) control, and (6) meaning.

Use of Space. In an enmeshed community there is little privacy of either interior or exterior space. Much of life goes on in common rooms, such as the community room, dining room, or chapel, where people are in close proximity to one another. Individuals leave the door of their own room open when they are in it. Listening to music or watching television is done in the company of others. Recreation is often held in common; community members are expected to be present and to participate. It would be unusual for anyone to be absent without a serious reason. Private, personal space is limited or nonexistent. Everyone knows what everyone else is saying or doing, and all this is shared at meals or community gatherings. If a community member is

Disengaged groups confine themselves to patterns of behavior that allow no sense of belonging, care, or authentic relating

away for any length of time, letters flow back and forth between the person and the community. Keeping each other informed about the minute happenings in each one's life holds a high priority. Letters home might be photocopied or published in a general newsletter, and a "round robin" from all at home is sent regularly to the community member away. The community considers itself together only when all its members are present.

In a disengaged community the opposite situation prevails. Common rooms are rarely used by members together. Persons utilize bedrooms or other private space most of the time when home. Doors are kept closed, and it feels uncomfortable to be in another's space. The central regions of the residence are not important. Each member creates his or her own space. Separate television sets and personal cars are maintained. No one's presence is very important in the community space. A boardinghouse mentality reigns. The religious residence is a hotel.

Interior space is "off limits" to others. Disengaged community members rarely share their thoughts and feelings with each other. Secretiveness is dominant. Each person is allowed his or her space, which is hoarded greedily. Members may use words like freedom, respect for privacy, and individuality to express what they expect from the community. In reality, they are confining themselves to patterns of behavior that allow no sense of belonging, honest care, accountability, or authentic relating. Members experience little emotional involvement with each other or the community.

Within a community Minuchin would call functional, the use of space is balanced and appropriate. Members feel at home and sensitive to each

individual's needs for privacy and for enjoying common space together. Privacy gives the separation and space that are necessary for life, and community meets some of the social needs of the individual. There is a consciousness of others sharing the same environment. Open or closed doors do not become an issue. Each person's presence is important but not always expected or required.

A sense of sharing inner space yet maintaining personal integrity with a comfortable distance is present. Members of such a community are able to share with one another those deeper values that brought each to religious life. Both support and challenge of one another flow from the level of trust that has grown among the members. Individual freedom and community accountability are in dynamic equilibrium.

Use of time. Closely related to the concept of space is that of time. In enmeshed communities time is always organized and, for the most part, unalterably scheduled. Community life follows the community clock: Mass together, meals at set times, prayer at fixed hours. All live in a pattern that is rigid and unyielding rather than merely organizational. No one may be called away from community activities to the phone. The time schedule takes precedence over individual needs. A member who is absent from a community function is likely to struggle with feelings of neurotic guilt. Confreres may harbor resentment at the absence of another or, at best, store it away in memory that Sister Kathleen has missed this meeting or that meal.

The calendar of the community also regulates life. Annual retreats and vacations are planned so that all are together. A holiday weekend away in a benefactor's house is attended by all of the community crowded together. Everyone is in phase with everyone else. An invitation offered to an individual is declined if it conflicts in the slightest way with a community function.

In a disengaged system, however, individual schedules and commitments always take precedence over community times. Being with outsiders, who are invariably considered to have extremely full schedules, always calls for adjustments to be made at the sacrifice of community. It is not uncommon in a disengaged community to have persons regularly absent from prayers or meals or to be called out unexpectedly and often. If someone or something better comes up, schedules can always be changed.

Celebration days are originally planned so that most can be present but often need to be readjusted to individual wishes and decisions. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter are rarely spent together, but another day may be set aside for the community to celebrate, since blood families or friends take priority over the community. Evenings, weekends, and vacations are individually regulat-

ed. Some members spend all free time outside of the community. Perhaps it is an ailing parent requiring constant presence or support that provides a justification for being away. Whatever the excuse, it requires that the person spend all free time apart from the community.

A functional community is able to achieve a delicate balance of flexibility and organization in the use of time. Time spent together is adjusted to individual desires yet does not detract from building community spirit. Value is placed on being together as well as on being apart. A desire is felt by members to spend time together in community. Emphasis on the quality of time spent together rather than on quantity is the functional norm. Freedom in meeting individual needs is recognized.

Use of Energy. Members of enmeshed communities pour energy into the community and its needs. The work of the community and life together consume all that one has to give. Little energy is left over for people outside these two realms. The community and its work come first at all times and in all places. To take a day off to relax with friends outside the community can generate guilt. The community is the place where energy is discharged; at the same time it must be the source of revitalization. There is a danger of the energy becoming static because members experience too much of the same old routine and not enough variety.

Religious in disengaged communities reserve their vitality and enthusiasm for nonmembers. Home is a place of fatigue, complaints, and boredom. To be active and life-giving means to be on the go with co-workers, at meetings, or with friends every night of the week. The residences of disengaged communities are quiet and empty on weekends. Discontent and an attitude of "let's get it over with" prevail in community activities. Chronic somatic symptoms, excessive television watching, or ennui take up any leftover energy in each person. Even though physically present to each other, members are mentally preoccupied with outside activities they are planning.

In the functional religious community, multiple sources of support exist and are utilized. There is a balance between input and output of energy. Community activities energize the individual, and each person's own energy intensifies that of the community. Community energy enables each member to reach out to others in his or her ministry; those served, in turn, energize, support, and challenge the community. Joy, suffering, responsibility, and care are shared among community members.

AFFECTIVE GOALS SOUGHT

Because of avoidance of conflict, there is often an intense pseudointimacy among enmeshed community members. Real intimacy cannot exist unless

conflict is faced and resolved. Pseudointimacy is based on a false loyalty that will protect the other and remain true at all costs rather than allow members to work through areas of disagreement and hostility. Fusion leads to an intense level of emotion that remains high over a long period of time. It is somewhat akin to an adolescent burst of enthusiasm. Community members cannot wait to be with and talk with one another. To return to community is like finding a safe harbor during a storm.

In disengaged communities affect, or emotion, is restrictive and variable. Perfunctory physical gestures of affection are exchanged at community gatherings or liturgical celebrations, but in day to day living emotions are restrained, arid, or nonexistent. Even smiles are bestowed indifferently or mechanically. Genuine feelings of happiness and anger are reserved for individuals outside the community. A person's experience of pain is regarded as his or her own, and no one in community cares enough to intervene. The anomaly of the community being the "last to know" is prevalent. Support groups of friends exist mainly outside of the community structure.

Functional community members respond to others with the maturity and emotional consistency suitable to the situation. Interpersonal conflicts are neither summarily buried and ignored nor treated with cold indifference. Resolving difficulties in an open trustfulness, each person tries to listen to the other. Petty misunderstandings, if they impoverish community, are resolved as quickly as possible. Emotions are expressed honestly and appropriately. Living and sharing together enables a spiritual intimacy to grow among the members. Genuine care for one another is discernable. Supportive friendships, both within and outside of community, are welcomed and sustained.

POWER ISSUES IN COMMUNITY

In an enmeshed community there is a definite hierarchy and power structure. Rules and discipline are authoritarian. The uses of space, time, and energy are well defined and regulated. The "good" community members are those who align themselves within this framework and follow it faithfully. Maverick members are those who find themselves reaching beyond the structure; blame for not being in phase is placed on their shoulders. Expectations that all will conform and comply are high. There is a lack of understanding as to why one might want to look elsewhere for support, relaxation, or interests.

Disengaged communities' power can be expressed as "divided, we stand and fall." Decisions are made on an individual level, even to the detriment of the group. There is little sense of compromise. Firmly entrenched in their own space, time, and energy, members may superficially ex-

press regret for continued absence, but basically they go on pursuing their own desires. Community house meetings and decision making are characterized by passive (and occasionally active) power plays on the part of individuals striving to get their own way. Self-exempting statements like "I won't be able to be here" are made without any explanation or with such unquestionable logic and long-winded verbiage that no one is able to contest them. Group decisions are shams and thus ignored. Superiors become like jugglers attempting to keep things moving without massive disruptions. Members function autonomously, disregarding any community constraint, and are allowed to do so. Some pursue a higher degree, an unapproved ministry, an illicit liaison, or abuse financial resources in such a way that commitment and interdependence are evaded.

A functional community allows for both autonomy and mutuality. While maintaining stability, it leaves room for adaptability. Each member is responsible for personal participation and initiative in community decisions. In freely choosing to be dependent on the community, a member can accept the decisions of authority. Dialogue and open communication are respected. The final decision is not just handed down to be obeyed or promulgated without consultation. Community power and authority exist midway between rigid rules and chaotic disorder.

COMMUNITY SEARCH FOR MEANING

Finally, the meaning of life for those in an enmeshed community is clear and certain. The rigid structure provides a black-and-white means of attaining one's goals. The community itself gives one a purposeful identity. There is no need to look outside. The members share a certainty, a security with one another. Personal meaning is dissolved into the conglomerate of community activity. Little opportunity for variety in apostolic work is available. One gives over one's personal significance to the community; there is an overidentification with the congregation. One is first a docile member of the community and, second, a human person.

In a disengaged community there is no consensus about the importance of community. The only nucleus is self; no one else in community attaches any great importance to you. Community life has a lack of clear purpose and definite goals. Each person carefully avoids getting involved with anyone else. There is rarely any response given when one is appropriate or required. An incongruous "as if" atmosphere prevails. It is as if a community exists, but it does not. It is as if there is mutual support as well as an orderly and agreeable way of living, but in reality each person exists as a separate entity. Members belong to one another superficially, almost in name only. No corporate identity is developed by individual members.

The distinctive charism of the functional community finds relevance in each member's personal identity

When a community is functional it generates a sense of purpose and direction congruent with personal values and aspirations within each of its members. It contributes to each person's sense of identity, since the distinctive charism of the community finds relevance in each of its members. Meaning motivates and empowers each person individually, and all together, to go forth to serve the needs of others. The identity of the community is maintained, and each person's own individuality finds room for growth and expression.

ASSESSMENT OF INTERACTION

Minuchin suggests several areas for concentration in assessing family interaction. These can be applied also to religious communities. If it is perceived that the group is dysfunctional at either the enmeshed or disengaged extremes of the continuum and the community wishes to counteract this, the following questions and considerations could prove helpful.

First, to identify the type of dysfunction: What is the preferred interactional pattern of the community members? Enmeshed? Disengaged? What about the subsystems of the community? What are they? Who are involved?

Second, to measure the major symptoms of the community's dysfunction: How flexible is this community? Can it adapt to change? How do the members respond to stress? What are the means of support for the members, both individually and communally? How are they used? How sensitive is the system to individual needs and behavior? Con-

versely, how sensitive are individuals to community needs and actions? Are members too highly perceptive or not enough?

Third, and most important, a community needs to evaluate the means it is employing to resolve its difficulties. Levels of motivation and willingness are crucial factors. We recommend that an outside facilitator, a professional counselor, or a consultation center be engaged to improve group communication skills, to restructure interactional patterns and subsystems that are dysfunctional, and to provide education and guidance for community members. Remember that, according to Minuchin's theory, it is the entire community that is considered the target for any beneficial change.

In addition to or as a preparation for utilizing outside resources, a religious counselor may serve as a catalyst for community change by suggesting activities or tasks that would facilitate the balancing of community development with the psychosocial growth of each individual in the community. For example, a counselor could encourage the members of an enmeshed community to reach outside their rigid boundaries and invite other people to join them for various activities that have usually been considered exclusively for community. A disengaged community needs to highlight the value of time spent with each other—time in which members learn to relax, share, and play together. In both groups there has to be a balance of internal and external support for the members and the fulfillment of their needs.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have described functional and dysfunctional family systems and applied some of their characteristics to religious communities. Emphasizing the extremes of Minuchin's continuum, enmeshed and disengaged groups, we have somewhat exaggerated our examples and descriptions in order to clarify these positions. No community could totally match the extremes and still continue to exist. Communities do not conform to a pure type; they always contain a mixture of elements. A disengaged community may have some enmeshed members, some rigid people, and may even interact in triangles. A large disengaged congregation can have some enmeshed local communities. An enmeshed community may contain some rugged individualists who are practically disengaged. An important consideration is that each community is positioned somewhere along this continuum and is dynamically engaged in either a functional or dysfunctional interactive process.

The spiritual dimension of community life has not been considered in these pages, since our article has purposely concentrated in a limited way on interactional dynamics and some of the psychological and social processes of religious life. Being members of religious communities, we have cer-

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tainly not intended to disparage religious life as it is being lived but rather to provide a means of assessing its functional level in meeting both individual and community needs. Grace builds on nature: to become fully human and alive, one must become free psychologically, spiritually, intellectually, and physically, and so must communities.

A perfectly functioning community never exists. All religious communities are in process, on the way, “running toward that to which God calls us—life in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14) The stumbling blocks along the road are many. Like all human communities, religious communities are composed of the blind, the deaf, and the lame and see only “dimly through a mirror.” (1 Corinthians 13:12) New perspectives for identifying community strengths and areas where growth is needed are valuable. Each new view of how a community is functioning can assist its well-intentioned members to take a further step toward becoming more fully who they are called by God to be.

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SELF-SACRIFICE, SELF-FULFILLMENT OR SELF-TRANSCENDENCE IN CHRISTIAN LIFE?

JOANN WOLSKI CONN, WALTER E. CONN

A recent New York University symposium entitled "The Relations of the Psychological and the Spiritual" asked some very difficult questions. Among these were: Does the "self" of the gospels and the "self" of psychology refer to the same reality? Are we speaking in the same universe of discourse when we commend the individual's search for self-actualization and when we say that the individual should deny self and take up the cross? Are humanistic psychology and christian spirituality moving in the same direction or are they at odds?

In answering these questions, most participants at the symposium concluded that humanistic psychology and christian spirituality are incompatible in some important ways. Granting the difficulties of definition, we suggest that such a dichotomy is unnecessary and that the introduction of a third element offers a reconciling possibility beyond the dilemma of what we have termed self-fulfillment versus self-sacrifice. Our alternative is self-transcendence. And our suggestion is this: Christian spiritual life is realized in dynamic self-transcendence that reaches beyond either static self-fulfillment or self-sacrifice. Although we acknowledge the existence of acceptable human and christian understandings of both self-fulfillment and self-sacrifice, we believe that common understandings of these ideals are often anti-human and anti-christian.

SELF-FULFILLMENT IN VOGUE

Norman Mailer suggested ten years ago that ours is the century of the ego, and Tom Wolfe tagged the seventies for posterity as the "me decade." Self-fulfillment, self-enhancement, self-promotion, self-liberation were, and still are, promoted from

paperback racks of nearly every bookstore and supermarket in America. The titles tell the tale: *Looking Out for #1*, *How to Be Your Own Best Friend*, *Breaking Free*, *Pulling Your Own Strings*, and *How to Get Whatever You Want Out of Life*.

Jerry Rubin, sixties activist, may be atypical, but none of us completely escaped the self-absorbed spirit of his search. In *Growing (Up) at Thirty-Seven* Rubin writes, "In five years, from 1971 to 1975, I directly experienced est, gestalt therapy, bioenergetics, rolfing, massage, jogging, health foods, tai chi, Esalen, hypnotism, modern dance, meditation, Silva Mind Control, Arica, acupuncture, sex therapy, Reichian therapy and More House—a smorgasbord in New Consciousness."

The modern search for self-fulfillment is a favorite target of social and cultural critics. Christopher Lasch's devastating critique in *The Culture of Narcissism* is only the best known of several attacks. Social researcher Daniel Yankelovich, in *Psychology Today* (April, 1981), points to the inherent contradiction he finds in the search for self-fulfillment—a search he characterizes as grassroots experimentation, involving in one way or another perhaps as many as eighty percent of adult Americans. Whereas the traditional ethic of self-denial and self-sacrifice has been replaced by an ethic that denies people nothing, Yankelovich found in his interviews that "many truly committed self-fulfillment seekers focus so sharply on their needs that instead of achieving the more intimate re-

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No valid christian interpretation can recommend denial of the creative, critical, free, and loving aspects of the self

lationships they desire, they grow farther apart from others." This reflects something of the narcissistic character disorder discussed frequently in current psychiatric literature and of the self-centered affliction, as Robert Coles, in *The New Yorker* (August, 1979), describes it, of "one whose central, controlling ways of getting on give evidence of a strong avoidance of lasting attachments to other people, accompanied often by a hunger for just such human bonds."

Critiques of self-fulfillment seem entirely appropriate when they are aimed at the pseudohumanism of consumer-oriented "pop psychology." Although the explicit goals of many self-fulfillment therapies appear humanistic in their interpersonal and social orientations, the implicit understanding of these approaches is often self-destructive in its naive individualism. The self of pop psychology is a bag of desires, and self-realization means fulfilling as many of these desires as possible. Initiates run off in every direction to gratify their every impulse, only to end up deeply frustrated. Yankelovich cites countless divorces and wrong-headed career changes as part of the confusing fallout from the risky search for self-fulfillment. Unfortunately, people fail to perceive the paradox that authentic realization of deep human yearnings occurs only when they turn their primary attention from selfish interests and desires to involve themselves genuinely in the needs and desires of others.

SELF-SACRIFICE MISUNDERSTOOD

Pop psychology is only the latest edition of the guide for the self-seeker. Through the ages there have been as many versions as there are forms of

self-delusion. The traditional christian response has always been rooted in the gospel injunction to renounce oneself, take up one's cross, and follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). The gospel call to follow Jesus has often been misunderstood to require sacrifice or denial of the self's authentic realization. Several recent studies argue that misinterpretation of the gospel has been involved in legitimating the traditional relegation of women, for instance, to subordinate roles of passive, obedient service, implying that self-sacrifice is holy, whereas self-assertion is sinful.

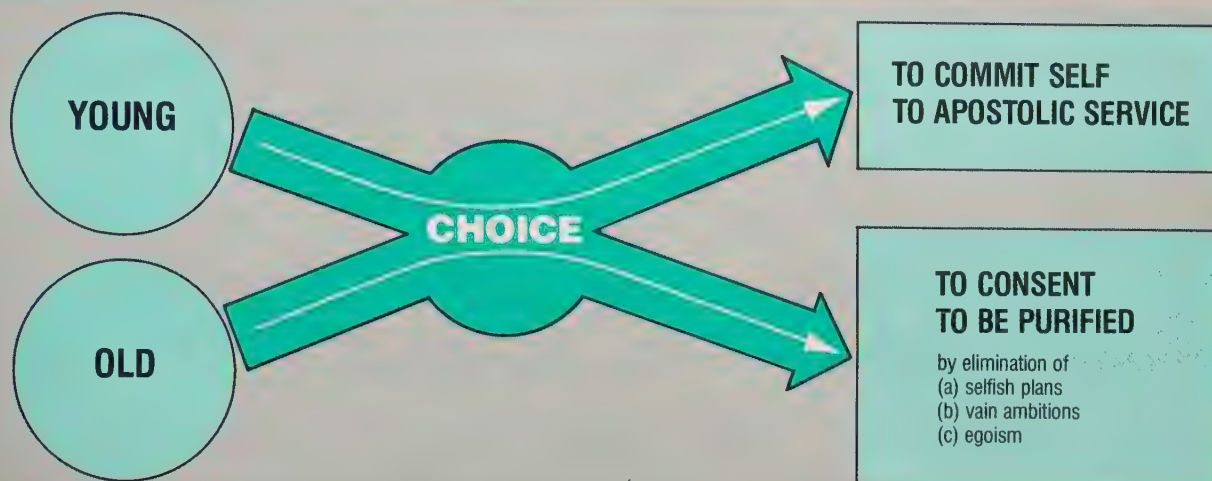
Mary Gordon does justice to the ambiguity of such reality in her novel *Final Payments*. Isabel Moore, the heroine who has sacrificed her young adulthood to care for her invalid father, does not regret a moment of her experience. Though adolescent guilt over a discovered fling with her boyfriend plays a key part in the relationship with her father, Isabel looks back on her sacrifice "not with self-pity but with extreme pride." Gordon sees sacrifice rooted in affection as having immense importance in life. But she is also deeply intrigued by powerful women who suddenly buckle under to the authority of a man.

Misunderstood sacrifice of the self has also affected the preaching of the gospel, though in less personally destructive ways. For many men in the Western world, christianity is a "woman's religion," and distortion of the gospel has been extended as ideological justification for many situations of oppressive servitude. As long as this misreading of the gospel as a rationale for oppression continues, Nietzsche's judgment that christianity is a religion for slaves will stand.

Such interpretations of self-sacrifice must be rejected as anti-christian. Jesus calls us to loving service of our neighbor as a friend, not to self-destructive servitude. No valid christian interpretation can recommend denial or sacrifice of the conscious, creative, critical, responsible, free, and loving aspects of the self. To follow Jesus genuinely in his life of service to others requires a commitment of the self that such self-sacrifice would destroy. To follow Jesus means to live one's life as he lived his; a reader of the gospels need not psychologize Jesus to realize that the christian life of creative and responsible love requires courageous assertiveness as much as realistic humility.

What is a christian understanding of self-sacrifice if not sacrifice of the self? Quite simply, christian self-sacrifice consists in the denial of all those otherwise quite legitimate desires, wishes, and interests of the self that interfere with a single-minded commitment to follow Jesus in love. Such commitment does not demand sacrifice of the self, its development and realization, but it entails sacrifice of anything that stands in the way of loving our neighbor, even the sacrifice of life itself. From the viewpoint of christian commitment to neighbor and genuine self-realization, pop psychology's list

CHOICES CONFRONTING APOSTOLIC PERSONS



of possible desires is endless, and particular desires are often contradictory. Many of the goods sought by seekers of self-fulfillment are legitimate and positively worthwhile, but the gospel tells us that the search for such genuine personal goods through focusing exclusively on the self is fundamentally illusory. The renunciation of fulfillment-seeking allows the possibility of authentic self-realization in the loving service to which Jesus calls us.

GOSPEL ENJOINS SELF-TRANSCENDENCE

Complementing the idea that both self-fulfillment and self-sacrifice, when selfish, are deadly for a Christian life of loving service, a living image of dynamic self-transcendence has been presented by a number of contemporary theologians, including Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan, John Macquarrie, and David Tracy. Self-transcendence, as an image suggestive of the dynamism of Christian spiritual life, stands in total opposition to the image of self-sacrifice understood as denial, repudiation, or harmful negation of the self. (Only a self affirmed in the reality of its subjectivity and realized in its essential potentiality for objectivity is capable of transcending itself.) The self is not negated through transcendence; it is realized in its authentic being. Self-transcendence is genuine self-realization. The image of self-sacrifice, understood as a sacrifice of the self as responsible for a life of loving service, must be rejected by an understanding of the gospel in terms of self-transcendence.

At the same time, the image of self-transcendence stands firmly against any image of self-fulfillment

that focuses on the self merely as a collection of desires to be fulfilled. Such an image of the self is essentially that of a passive receptacle, a self whose happiness consists in being filled to the brim. Even if this image were accurate, such a self would condemn practically everyone to a hellish state of angry frustration. From the standpoint of fulfilling desires, the self is not a receptacle but a bottomless pit. Even the most talented and successful elite will find endless frustration in the search for such self-fulfillment. By contrast, the self implicit in the image of self-transcendence, the opposite of a passive receptacle, is a dynamic, flowing spring that is realized by moving beyond itself. Freed from the illusion of quantitative fulfillment, such a self senses the peace of authentic realization in the very activity of realistic knowing, responsible choosing, and genuine loving.

Like the gospel, the image of self-transcendence suggests the paradoxical view that true self-realization results not from a selfish effort to fulfill one's desires but from extending beyond oneself in an attempt to realize the good of others. Such realization of the self through transcendence is a form of self-fulfillment, a fulfillment of the fundamental desire for truth, value, and love that we possess as personal beings. Although fulfillment of self through self-transcendence brings a sense of tranquil happiness, the very nature of this basic human inclination defies any self-centered striving for happiness through fulfillment. In fact, fulfillment of the radical personal drive toward self-transcendence requires that one empty oneself, in the sense of sacrificing the fulfillment of otherwise legitimate desires. The gospel makes clear that the

Each achievement of creative understanding, realistic judgment, and genuine love is an instance of self-transcendence

life of the true self is saved only by giving up everything else, even life itself in the ultimate case, in loving service to our neighbor.

PSYCHOLOGISTS EMPLOY SAME CONCEPT

Though the concept of self-transcendence has been developed most extensively by theologians, it can also be found in the works of many psychologists. Viktor Frankl, for example, discusses self-transcendence in each of his many works. His early treatment of this fundamental human dynamism in *Man's Search for Meaning* contains an arrestingly direct statement of his basic thesis regarding self-transcendence: "Human existence is essentially self-transcendence rather than self-actualization. Self-actualization is not a possible aim at all, for the simple reason that the more a man would strive for it, the more he would miss it." Only to the extent that a person is committed to life's meaning, Frankl asserts, is he or she actualized, for "self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself, but only as a side effect of self-transcendence."

Even when the reality of self-transcendence is not named as such, it can play a central role in the interpretation of human existence. From the perspective of christian spirituality, Henri Nouwen, in *Reaching Out*, conveys the dynamism of different dimensions of self-transcendence through the image of "reaching out." For Nouwen, the spiritual life is a relationship among three constant movements of reaching out to ourselves (moving from loneliness to solitude), to others (moving from hostility to hospitality), and to God (moving from illusion to prayer).

Perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive articulation of the image of self-transcendence is that of Bernard Lonergan. Over the course of a professional lifetime Lonergan has attempted to map the route of self-transcendence in its many dimensions. This is not the place to examine his charts in detail, but a brief comment will shed some light on the role of self-transcendence in the spiritual life.

COMPLEX FUNDAMENTAL DRIVE

For Lonergan, self-transcendence occurs in a person's response to the urgent demand of the human spirit for meaning, truth, value, and love. Though single in source and goal, this inborn tendency manifests itself in interconnected questions. The drive for understanding, for example, seeks meaning in questions for intelligence. Once attained, such meaning is critically scrutinized by the drive for truth in reflective questions heading toward realistic judgment. Then, with understanding and judgment oriented toward action, a further moral question follows: Given my judgment of the situation and the action required, what am I going to do about it? Such practical questioning occurs within a matrix of affectivity that must be strong enough to support the required action over the various obstacles of conflicting interests.

Thus, every achievement of creative understanding, realistic judgment, responsible choice, and genuine love is an instance of self-transcendence. Among all the possible realizations of human potential, this cognitive, moral, and affective self-transcendence is the yardstick of authentic self-realization. The gospel call to intelligent, responsible, loving service of our neighbor requires the fulfillment of this fundamental personal drive for self-transcendence.

Self-transcending love is also the norm by which every other personal concern, interest, need, desire, or wish must be judged and, if necessary, sacrificed. Fidelity to this kind of love is the only appropriate christian response to God's love for us and to the divine life we carry within us and express to the world.

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EMPATHY Is at the Heart of LOVE

JAMES J. GILL, S.J., M.D.

In an earlier issue of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* we asked our readers to let us know what topics they would want to see us cover in the near future. Several people wrote to tell us that it would be helpful to them if we would write about empathy. One letter we received included the statement: "I work in a supervisory capacity with two dozen professionals under me. Several of those have told me that I'm insensitive, self-centered, and unconcerned about other persons. One explained to me that what these others are trying to help me realize is that I lack 'empathy.' Maybe you could help me understand what empathy really is, why it's so important, and how I can develop it."

Since empathy is, in fact, a fundamental human capacity and a prerequisite for effective parenting, teaching, healing, managing, leadership, counseling, and other forms of people-helping and service, the topic certainly deserves a comprehensive treatment. Unfortunately, as the distinguished psychologist Kenneth Clark has pointed out, "The available literature does neglect a clear definition

and a comprehensive theoretical approach to this important phenomenon." In his address to the American Psychological Association in 1979, Clark observed: "Empathy remains an important neglected topic in social psychology and social science."

EMPATHY DESCRIBED

Clark is not saying that definitions have not been offered. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines empathy as "the capacity for participating in a vicarious experiencing of another's feelings, volitions, or ideas and sometimes another's movements to the point of executing bodily movements resembling his." Lawrence Kolb, M.D., in *Modern Clinical Psychiatry*, defines it as a "healthy form of identification which is limited and temporary but which enables one person to feel for and with another and to understand his experiences and feelings." Kolb describes the empathic individual as one who "possesses a warm capacity

for projecting himself into the situations and feelings of others. This quality," he adds, "will be found only in those with a flexible, mature and well-established personality."

The term empathy is derived from the German word *Einfühlung*, which means "feeling into." It suggests that the empathic person is making contact with another and reaching into that individual to perceive what he or she is experiencing, particularly in the realm of feelings. Empathy is not the same as sympathy, which comes from the Greek *sympatheia* (having common feelings). Sympathy signifies, according to *Webster's New International*, "the act or capacity of entering into or sharing the feelings or interests of another; the character or fact of being sensitive to or affected by another's emotions, experiences, or especially sorrows." The two terms are quite similar, and they are often used synonymously in popular writing. Empathy, however, is generally understood to describe a state of mind or process in which one person *knows* what is being felt by another but is not experiencing that same feeling, at least not with any great intensity, as happens when one is experiencing full-blown sympathy with another. Both of these terms are closely related to others such as pity, compassion, commiseration, and condolence. The nuances distinguishing each from the others are nicely spelled out in the *New International*.

ESSENTIAL IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

In general, to be empathic implies an ability to understand another person deeply, to be able to put oneself into the experience of another, and at the same time to retain objectivity. This mode of intimate knowing is a central element in psychoanalysis, the method Freud devised for treating psychiatric patients. His type of therapy requires of psychoanalysts a developed ability to *interpret*, i.e., to bring their patient's unconscious occurrences (feelings, wishes, conflicts) into their consciousness. This effort on the part of the therapist is aimed at helping the emotionally ill individual to become aware of the source, cause, history, or meaning of events in the patient's psychological realm of functioning. In order to arrive at an *interpretation*, analysts use as personal resources their own intellect and theoretical knowledge, their intuition and fantasy, and especially their capacity for empathy. Interpretation is generally recognized as the most important instrument of psychoanalytic technique, and to utilize it for the patient's benefit, empathy is indispensable.

In *American Handbook of Psychiatry*, Silvano Arieti describes the therapist's task: "It is necessary for the analyst to feel close enough to the patient to be able to empathize with the most intimate details of his emotional life; yet he must be able to become distant enough for dispassionate understanding. This is one of the most difficult requirements of

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delicately without
making judgments"**

psychoanalytic work—the alternation between the temporary and partial identification of empathy and the return to the distant position of the observer, the evaluator, etc." Acknowledging that it is natural for any person to react emotionally to another human being's sufferings and intimate needs, Arieti insists that the response of the helpful therapist, "through empathy, must predominantly serve his understanding of the patient." Too much emotion, in the form of sympathy or compassion, must be avoided since it could interfere with the accomplishment of the task at hand. This same admonition deserves to be given helpfully to other counselors using other techniques as well as to parents, spiritual directors, teachers, and other facilitators of growth who are closely assisting people within a wide range of human services.

EXPERIENCING THE OTHER'S LIFE

Arieti provides a vivid description of the working psychiatrist or clinical psychologist alternating between empathy and a dispassionate understanding: "I change the way I am listening to her. I shift from listening from the outside to listening from the inside. I have to let a part of me become the patient, and I have to go through her experiences as if I were the patient and to introspect what is going on in me as they occur. What I am trying to describe are the processes that occur when one empathizes with the patient. I let myself experience the different events the patient has described and I also let myself expe-

rience the analytic hour, her associations, and her affects as she seems to have gone through them in the hour. I go back over the patient's utterances and transform her words into pictures and feelings in accordance with her personality. I let myself associate these pictures with her life experiences, her memories, her fantasies. As I have worked with this patient over the years, I have built up a working model of the patient consisting of her physical appearance, her behavior, her ways of moving, her desires, feelings, defenses, values, attitudes, etc. It is this working model of the patient that I shift into the foreground as I try to capture what she was experiencing. The rest of me is de-emphasized and isolated for the time being."

The mental elaboration of a working model of every single patient makes it possible for analysts to anticipate their clients' needs and tastes, to know what will delight and what will surprise them, and in general to "feel for" them through empathy. Elizabeth Douvan, in *The Modern American College*, calls attention to the fact that this sort of empathy is an essential element in every close or intimate interpersonal relationship, such as friendship, and not just in those that occur in the context of therapy.

When psychiatrists gain some particular bit of insight into the personality of their patient and feel that it might be helpful for that patient to be told what the therapist has learned, it is empathy, along with clinical judgment, that enables the doctor to decide whether this is a good time to inform the patient. Without empathy and educated judgment, the clinician could not possibly be sure that the information is valuable and that it can be communicated without traumatizing the patient. The same sort of empathy is needed, of course, whenever any human being feels inclined to confront another with some potentially painful truth that has been observed or surmised about that individual's personality or behavior. In other words, the art of helpful confrontation requires the previous development of a capacity for empathy on the part of the confronting person.

A TEMPORARY INDWELLING

Among the nonpsychoanalytic therapists who have studied and written about empathy is the pioneering psychologist Carl Rogers, who originated "client-centered," or "person-centered," therapy. Rogers, in *On Becoming a Person*, defined empathy as sensing the client's private world "as if it were your own, but without ever losing the 'as if' quality." Later, in *A Way of Being* he described empathy more completely: "An empathic way of being with another person has several facets. It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other

person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever that he or she is experiencing. It means temporarily living in the other's life, moving about in it delicately without making judgments; it means sensing meanings of which he or she is scarcely aware, but not trying to uncover totally unconscious feelings since this would be too threatening. It includes communicating your sensings of the person's world. . . . It means frequently checking with the person as to the accuracy of your sensing, and being guided by the responses you receive. You are a confident companion to the person in his or her inner world."

Rogers believes that people who are involved in helping others to grow tend to underestimate the importance of empathy for the understanding of personality dynamics and for bringing about changes in the direction of maturity and health in personality and behavior. He calls empathy "one of the most delicate and powerful ways of using ourselves . . . it is a way of being that is rarely seen in full bloom in a relationship." Rogers also notes that research evidence "points strongly to the conclusion that a high degree of empathy in a relationship is possibly *the* most important factor in bringing about change and learning."

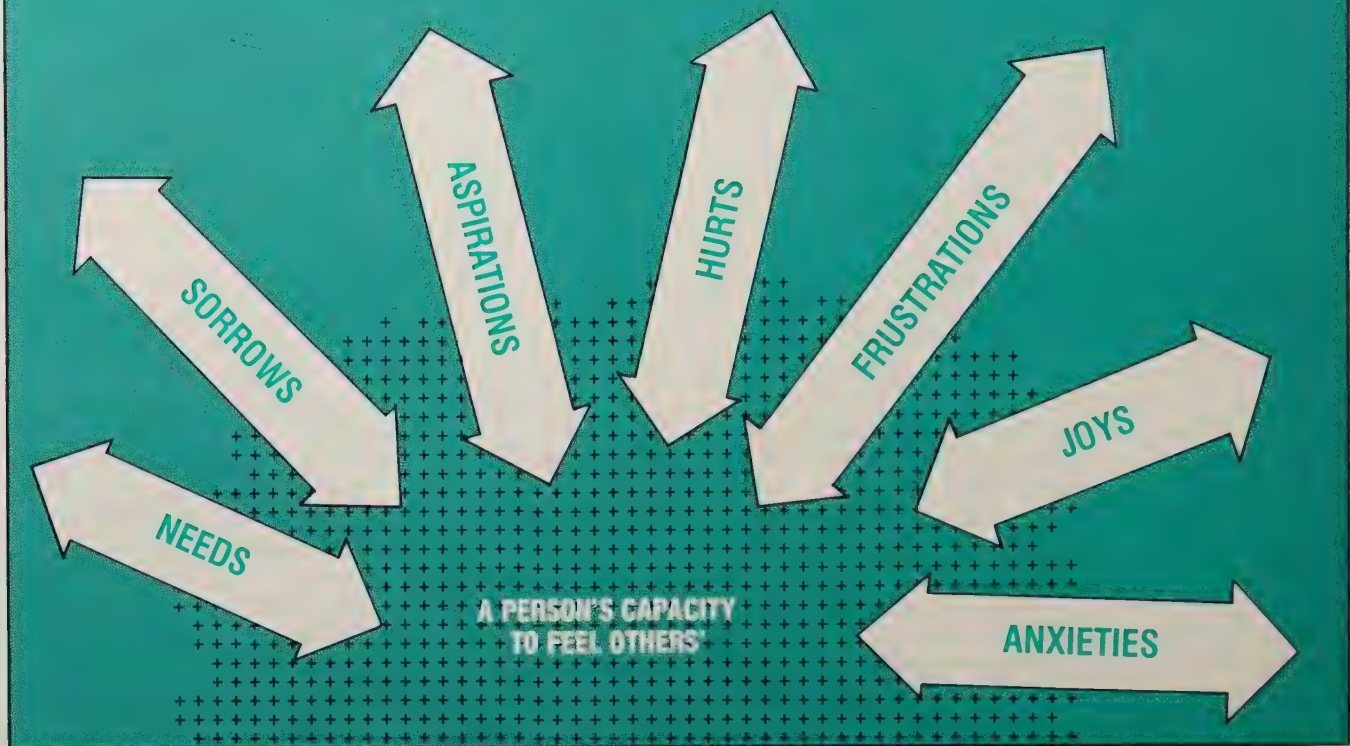
The research to which Rogers is referring has shown that the ideal therapist is, first of all, empathic • Clients are better judges of empathy than are their therapists • Even experienced therapists often fall short of being empathic • The better integrated as a person the therapist is, the higher degree of empathy he or she exhibits • The more experienced a therapist is, the more likely he or she is to be empathic • Empathy early in the relationship predicts success later on • Empathic understanding is provided freely by the therapist, not drawn from him or her • Brilliance and diagnostic perceptiveness are unrelated to empathy.

SOME SEEM COMPELLED

Kenneth Clark has insightfully described empathy as "the capacity of an individual to feel the needs, the aspirations, the frustrations, the joy, the sorrows, the anxieties, the hurt, indeed, the hunger of others as if they were his or her own." Clark observes, in relation to people in general, not just therapists: "Extremely empathic human beings appear to have no choice. The needs, the experiences, and the problems of others affect their organism. Functionally—as distinct from merely verbally—empathic individuals are compelled to assist, to advocate, to sustain, and to support their fellow human beings: The extremely empathic person seems compelled to assume risks and to jeopardize personal status and position from a compulsive need to identify with those who are less privileged."

Clark finds, however, that the majority of human beings appear less driven by an inner need—

CLARK'S VIEW OF EMPATHY



whether that need is derived from anxiety, guilt, or love—to act so extremely altruistically and that they “are able to make practical accommodations to the realities of inequality and injustice.” These ordinary people “manage to control the extent of personal risk and jeopardy in seeking to discharge moral obligations. They balance the egocentric with the empathic. They accept the moral ideals up to the point when they interfere with their personal goals.” Clark believes that the fact that the greater number of human beings fall into this category “defines the basis of social realities and determines the pace of social progress.”

FOUR DEGREES OCCUR

The same psychologist has suggested that it is possible to describe four degrees of empathy that people display. These would include: (1) Egocentric individuals, who in the extreme case do not experience empathy at all. In general, the more egocentric (self-focused) a person is, the less empathic. (2) Empathy extends slightly beyond the self to include some, if not all, members of the immediate family. (3) Empathy extends to other human beings

but only to those with qualities and characteristics similar to those in their family. These persons—probably the majority of human beings—are able to empathize with others who are similar to themselves in color, nationality, religion, sex, and status. This has been called “chauvinistic empathy,” a form of social egocentricity that can trigger inter-group and international tensions, conflicts, wars, and if not restrained, the annihilation of all humanity. (4) The highest and least common form of empathy is that in which the individual is universally sensitive to the condition and feelings of all human beings.

This last and expanded empathy is the most difficult type to achieve. It appears to require the most complete development of the anterior frontal lobe of the brain reinforced by training and experience, as well as God’s grace. This is the kind of empathy that religion seeks to develop and sustain. Like the poet John Donne who saw himself as “involved in *Mankind*,” people who live at this level can share the joys of those who are experiencing success, the sorrows of those who undergo deprivation or loss, and the anger of those whose yearnings and needs meet frustration rather than fulfillment. It is this

quality of empathy that people promoting mature religious attitudes toward issues such as justice and peace are attempting to inculcate, especially in the young.

EMPATHY BEGINS IN CHILDHOOD

Harvard University psychologist Robert White, writing in *The Modern American College*, has traced the development of empathy, "the capacity to share in the feelings of another person," back to childhood. He cites the studies of Lois Murphy to support the position that children frequently respond to the feelings of other children with considerable empathy. She noted that while one child was crying, another child, seeing the first one's distress, might look sad, then break out in tears. This tendency to respond empathically appears to develop even as early as infancy and plays a significant part in the interaction between the nursing mother and her child. If the mother is tense, the child responds with comparable tension, which interferes with the enjoyment of feeding on the part of both. By the time the child has reached nursery school, White reports, "empathy and helping are easily observed, but they typically occur in specific episodes rather than as lasting attitudes."

Before adolescence, the empathic feelings that result in altruistic behavior are likely to extend only to family, relatives, and friends in the immediate environment. But during adolescence there is often displayed, according to White, "an abrupt expansion of empathy. The growth spurt in abstract thinking and generalization makes it possible at this point to project one's sympathies onto a global canvas." By this time, too, it is easier for most young people to be sensitively responsive because their own history generally includes a wide variety of personally experienced feelings and life situations. "Empathic feeling arises most directly out of what we have already experienced in ourselves," states White. It has also been observed that empathy toward a particular group of people is most likely to occur when one has personally faced a problem similar to theirs in one's own life.

Empathy has been found by educators to be expanded by extending the social experience of students of high school and college age. Summer employment, travel, political activity, and other ventures that put students in a position to share experiences with various types of people often provide occasions for development of their capacity for empathic understanding.

NOT INTELLECTUALLY LEARNED

Those who want to help others to develop this ability might be discouraged by Arieti's comment: "Empathy cannot be taught or learned. It is a capacity which everyone has had but has often lost as a result of anxieties, insecurities, and inhibitions."

**"Empathic feeling
arises most
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have already
experienced
in ourselves"**

Sometimes one can be treated and have these inhibitions and anxieties removed, and then one can develop the capacity to empathize again." Other therapists appear to disagree with Arieti. Rogers, for example, contends: "Perhaps the most important statement of all is that the ability to be accurately empathic is something that can be developed by training. Therapists, teachers and parents can be helped to become empathic. This is especially likely to occur if their own supervisors, teachers and parents are individuals of sensitive understanding."

Rogers, nonetheless, agrees with Arieti when he states that empathy is not learned intellectually; it is acquired, as most attitudes are, by being "caught, experientially from another person." Martin Grotjahn, writing in the journal *Psychiatry* (1949), has stated that the attitude of empathy can be acquired by the student through a process whereby the teacher uses his or her personal relationship with the student as a model so that the student can experience, through the teacher, the quality of empathy at work.

Other therapists have offered further suggestions about ways to develop the capacity for empathy. They have pointed out that (1) attaining an openness toward one's own feelings improves one's ability to respond to those of others, (2) parents, teachers, and counselors who favor the expression of affect and provide examples of helping behavior foster empathy in those they are forming, and (3) the vicarious experiencing of emotions in the lives of others through literature, opera, theater, television, and such media can expand one's capacity

FOUR DEGREES OF EMPATHY

UNIVERSAL

CHAUVINISTIC

FAMILY ONLY

EGOCENTRIC

for empathic response. Richard Chessick, M.D., in *Why Psychotherapists Fail*, is more explicit. He states that the study of aesthetics may help a person "to become a more sensitive human being with a greater capacity for empathy." He recommends the views of Pater, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Tolstoy, and Malraux, all of whom "emphasize the function of art both as a temporary escape from life's problems and as a direct influence upon both our intrapsychic balance and our perceptual capacities."

Further evidence that empathy can be developed through learning is seen in research findings that show that the more experienced therapists are, the more likely they are to be empathic. Moreover, as Rogers has reported, "The better integrated (in personality) the therapist is, the higher the degree of empathy he or she exhibits. Personality disturbance in the therapist goes along with a lower empathic understanding. Therapists who are free from

discomfort and confident in interpersonal relationships offer more of understanding." So, a way of preparing oneself to function more empathically in relationships is to strive toward attaining a mature, integrated personality as free as possible from emotional inhibitions. No question about it, this goal places a heavy personal burden on anyone who takes the role of helper (teacher, counselor, leader, manager, spiritual director) seriously.

SOMETIMES EASY, SOMETIMES HARD

Empathy is not always easy to manifest. University of San Francisco psychologist Michael Cavanagh, in *The Counseling Experience*, states: "With people who, because of their personality or problem, do not evoke much empathy, counselors can attempt to tunnel beneath the barbed fence of unattractiveness and abrasiveness and reach the scared human being hiding behind it. This is one of

the great challenges that face all counselors, and to meet it with a positive attitude is the mark of a good counselor."

Commenting on people who attempt to assist others in crisis situations, Cavanagh observes that these helpers need "a great deal of empathy, a great deal of strength, and a magnificent balance between the two." He acknowledges that "some people are easy to feel empathy toward—for example, the parents whose child has just died or the young person who has just been told that she has a terminal illness. Other people are much more difficult to feel empathy toward—the man who is in a crisis because he has just been arrested for molesting children, including his own, and is now in an acute depression or the woman who is in a state of shock because she shot her husband when he called her some vile names."

Referring to the need for strength on the part of those who act as counselors of others, Cavanagh adds: "Empathy without strength to balance it can slide off into sympathy and malleability which interferes with effective therapy. Strength in counselors means that they maintain a healthy sense of separateness from the person and a willingness to stand by their decisions unless there is some compelling reason not to." Cavanagh sees as a danger in crisis intervention the possibility that the helping person may become so sympathetic and immersed in the other's distress that he or she loses objectivity. He advises that helpers in such a situation should empathize with the pain being felt but "also remember that the pain is not happening to them and that their main role is not to empathize but to help the person return to a more accurate perspective of the situation and develop the skills to handle it effectively."

BENEFITS EMPATHY BESTOWS

What do persons who manifest empathy actually do for those whose feelings they share qualitatively, if not quantitatively? They make them feel valued, esteemed, and cared about. Finding the helping person making the effort to perceive accurately what they are experiencing, they are encouraged to focus on their own feelings and the meaning of what is happening to them and to go on with their experience, without inhibition, to its completion. For example, a grieving widow who finds her sorrow empathically understood by her friend or pastoral counselor is being enabled to face her true and deep feelings and what they tell her about her loss and all that it means to her to be able to grieve fully to the point of eventual completion. Psychologists have also found that empathic relationships contribute to helping people eradicate self-defeating behavior and improve destructive interpersonal relationships as well as to help (as in this example) people who are experiencing problems or situations that are distressing them.

"Empathy without strength to balance it can slide off into sympathy which interferes with effective therapy"

Empathy also serves to foster self-directed change and personal development. It helps too in teaching. At the National Consortium for Humanizing Education, David Aspy and Flora Roebuck defined empathy as "a teacher's attempt to understand the personal meaning of the school experience for each student." They found that when teachers demonstrate a high level of empathy, along with genuineness and esteem for the students, the students achieve significantly more academically, have more positive self-concepts, exhibit fewer disciplinary problems, and have a lower rate of absences from school. In short, empathy is related positively and significantly to student growth. Aspy and Roebuck also found that teachers who manifest a high level of empathic understanding toward their students tend to have more positive self-concepts than low-level teachers, are more self-disclosing to their students, give more praise, are more responsive to students' ideas, and lecture them less often.

Spiritual directors, like teachers, are more successful if they are empathic. Referring to the requisite qualities that must be developed by directors, if they are to be effective in their helping role, Jesuits William Barry and William Connolly, in *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, insist that directees "need to sense the warmth of the director in order to even begin the process. This kind of warmth shows itself in patient listening, perhaps more than in any other way. We are back again to the contemplative attitude. Life does not seem to provide many opportunities to talk to someone who really listens and tries to understand. All of us seem to have too much on our minds to pay close attention

What kinds of persons are generally seen to manifest a well-developed capacity for empathy?

to most other people. But spiritual directors make it their profession precisely to be listeners, to try to put aside their own cares, their own prejudices, their own desires for a place in the conversational sun in order to see the world through the eyes of this other person, to understand what he feels and not judge." Barry and Connolly are talking about the spiritual director's capacity for empathy, without calling it by name. This is the ability that makes possible the director's seeing what the directees are seeing, knowing what they are feeling, and comprehending what they are experiencing, especially through prayer, in their interaction with God.

PERSONS ADEQUATELY ENDOWED

What kinds of persons are generally seen to manifest a well-developed capacity for empathy? Various researchers have found the following characteristics: (1) Ability to suspend judgment, even to the point of gullibility (just the opposite of a detectivelike, suspicious attitude). (2) The capability of renouncing their own identity for a time and taking on in imagination the identity of another. (3) A treasury of personal experiences in living that can be recalled to aid in comprehending what is occurring in the lives of others. Familiarity with literature, poetry, theater, fairy tales, folklore, and games has been found helpful. They enliven the imagination and fantasy life. (4) Acceptance, on a man's part, of the feminine side of his nature, since empathy is acquired at the start of life through the mother-child relationship and the child's identification with her. (5) Ability to alternate between the intimacy of empathy and the distance required

for objective evaluation of what is occurring in another's functioning and one's own. (6) The anterior frontal lobes of the brain must be functioning. Persons who have sustained brain injury or undergone a surgical lobotomy affecting this part of their anatomy are found to lose the ability to empathize with others and are capable of gratifying only egocentric needs.

Unable to manifest appropriate empathy in response to others, along with those who are anatomically impaired, are • Impulse-ridden people who tend to slip from empathy into sympathetic identification with others and "act out" emotionally with them • Individuals whose thinking is rigidly obsessional (i.e., persistent thoughts preoccupy their mind) • Those who are extremely egocentric • People deprived of a full range of emotional experiences in their own lives • Persons who are in emotional distress (e.g., depressed while grieving a loss or anxious about the future) • Individuals who excessively intellectualize ("all head and no heart") • Insensitive people who are simply unaware of what others are experiencing.

Clark has written about those who lack the brain capacity of empathy: There are some who, in small numbers, "come into the world with such stunted development of the cortical (frontal lobes) base for empathic functioning that it is difficult, and in some cases probably impossible, for them to learn even that limited degree of empathy essential for stable and moral interaction with their fellow human beings. Without regard to their degree of intelligence or language sophistication, these individuals remain strictly egocentric." When this condition is extreme, Clark observes, they develop a psychopathic personality (one that seeks immediate personal gratification of every strong impulse, without restraint by conscience) or else become sadists or tyrants.

TRAINING FOR EMPATHY

Psychologists who educate therapists to be effective communicators sometimes employ a four-level empathy scale while evaluating the learner's performance. The first two levels of empathic understanding are unhelpful to the person being counseled; the third is minimally helpful, and the fourth, when used appropriately, is significantly more helpful.

A helper's Level 1 response is irrelevant or hurtful. It does not correspond with the surface feelings of the person needing help. A Level 2 response only partially communicates an awareness of the person's surface feelings. A response at Level 3 conveys the message that the person is understood at the level being expressed by him or her. A Level 4 response conveys that the one being helped is understood more deeply than his or her level of immediate awareness; the underlying feelings are accurately identified.

LEVELS OF RESPONSE

<p>LEVEL 1 irrelevant or hurtful. It does not correspond with the surface feelings of the person needing help</p>	<p>LEVEL 2 only partially communicates an awareness of the person's surface feelings.</p>	<p>LEVEL 3 conveys the message that the person is understood at the level being expressed by him or her.</p>	<p>LEVEL 4 conveys that the one being helped is understood more deeply than his or her level of immediate awareness; the underlying feelings are accurately identified.</p>
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To exemplify these various types of response, consider a statement made by a pastor: "I'm getting old; my parishioners don't seem to need me the way they used to."

A Level 1 response from a counselor, another priest, or a friend could be: "You've got time on your hands now, so why don't you stop complaining and do more reading, listening to music, or something like that."

Comment: This response does not correspond with the pastor's surface feelings. It is critical or judgmental and not at all likely to prove helpful.

Another Level 1 response to the pastor's same statement might be: "By the way, what did you do with the sign you always hung on your office door when you were busy counseling a parishioner?"

Comment: This response ignores the pastor's present feelings by shifting the topic away from the concern that he has expressed.

A Level 2 response could be: "There's nothing for you to be worried about; there will always be people in need of your help."

Comment: This response denies the pastor the right to feel the way he does and to regard his present situation as very threatening to his sense of well-being.

A response on Level 3 might be: "You're disappointed over having less contact with your parishioners now that you are getting on in years."

Comment: This reply includes the content of the pastor's statement; it gives evidence that the pas-

tor's surface feeling has been perceived; and it neither adds to nor subtracts from the pastor's statement. This type of response communicates the message that what he said has been heard and that an attempt is being genuinely made to understand how he feels. It will facilitate the pastor's self-exploration.

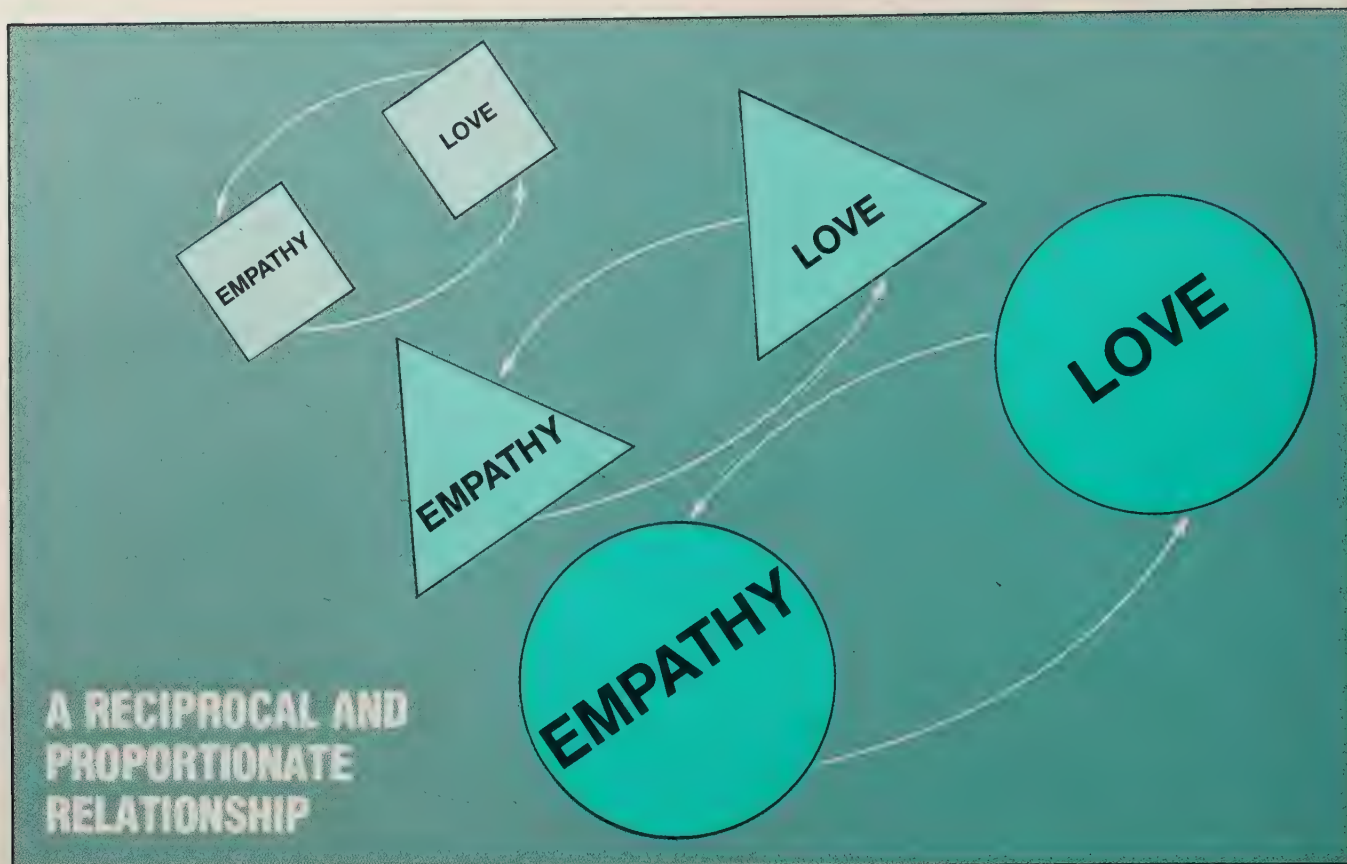
A Level 4 response might be: "It's depressing to realize that at your age you are not as popular a pastor as you would like to be. You're worried about how useless you are likely to feel in the future."

Comment: This kind of response contains all the elements of a Level 3 reply, and it also communicates directly that the pastor's *underlying* feelings have been perceived.

The accuracy of the responses at Levels 3 and 4 can be confirmed only by means of some validating statement made by the pastor in reply to the response he hears. For example: "That's right; you understand what's upsetting me" would validate the Level 3 response above. A statement such as "I'm afraid I'll wind up feeling totally useless" would confirm the accuracy of the Level 4 reply.

GUIDELINES FOR TRAINING

For people who want to improve their ability to respond to the statements of others with helpful empathy, educational psychologist George Gazda has written a useful manual, titled *Human Rela-*



tions Development. He borrows heavily from the research and writings of Robert Carkhuff, a disciple of Carl Rogers.

In his manual Gazda recalls that Carkhuff has provided eight guidelines for training people to respond with empathy. These can be summarized: (1) The helper should concentrate intensely on both the verbal and nonverbal behavior of the person being helped. (2) The helper should initially concentrate on responding at Level 3 as described above. (3) The helper should formulate empathic responses in language the one being helped is most likely to understand. (4) The helper should respond in a tone analogous to that of the person being helped. The tone of voice and concomitant nonverbal expressions serve to communicate an experiential understanding on the part of the helper. This, in turn, makes possible the experiencing and expressing of feelings that the one being helped has heretofore not been able to feel or express. (5) The helper should generally be rather active in responding with empathy early in the helping relationship. The helper's active verbal responsiveness ensures greater accuracy of communication and provides a model for the one being helped that stimulates his or her active involvement and responsiveness.

(6) Having established a base through Level 3

empathy responses, the helper should attempt to increase the other's level of self-understanding by formulating Level 4 empathic responses. Tentative formulations are often the most effective. (7) In addition to concentrating on what the one being helped is expressing, the helper must also be cognizant of what is not being expressed. Knowing and responding to what is being omitted (feelings and content) can be a means of showing a high level of empathy. (8) The helper must accurately interpret the other's response and be guided by this response in formulating future responses. Helpers evaluate their effectiveness on the basis of how effectively the ones being helped utilize the helpers' input.

LINKED CLOSELY TO LOVE

Looking at empathy in terms of its salience in human life, probably the most important observation that can be made is that it is intimately related to love. This fact alone renders the task of becoming an empathic person and developing others through education, religious formation, and spiritual direction to be as empathic as possible worthy of the special attention and efforts of everyone. The relationship between love and empathy is reciprocal: the more empathy a person has for another, the better the chance of love resulting. On the other

hand, the more love that exists, the higher the likelihood that empathy will be displayed.

Empathy facilitates the development of love for others because, by its very nature, it involves coming to know persons in depth rather than superficially. Communicating back a sign that they are being comprehended and accepted as they are gives those who are empathically understood a compelling proof that they are cared about; this cannot help but supply encouragement for them to examine their deeper self more confidently and to disclose it more transparently. Such sharing of one's feelings (along with thoughts, goals, strivings, hopes, and dreams) with an empathic listener will generally elicit gradually an attitude of love. Confirmation of this statement is found in the testimony of countless therapists, counselors, and spiritual directors who have discovered that they develop a loving relationship with all those whom they come to know intimately, that is, over a significant period of time and in real depth. This should not be a surprising observation, I would think, since every person on earth, created in the image and likeness of God, is loved by him and waits for us to know and find her or him lovable.

Investing the effort it takes to listen to others with empathy is demonstration of an esteem that enables them to grow in acceptance, esteem, and love of themselves. The same effort also constitutes an act of unselfishness, if it flows from a sincere concern, or loving care, about others' well-being, improvement, development, desires, and needs. All issues related to self are deliberately put out of mind for a time by the empathic listener, and this generous gift of self-relinquishment deserves to be considered an act of self-abnegation, a moment of laying down one's life so that another may live more fully. Repetition of this practice results in the development of a habit, an abiding inclination toward self-sacrifice based on a caring for one's neighbor. This same empathic quality was displayed by Jesus toward the sorrowful widow of Naim, the disillusioned travelers en route to Emmaus, and the frightened men in the boat imperiled by a violent storm.

MOTIVATION TOWARD ACTION

Empathy also serves as a preliminary step toward showing love in deeds. If, for example, I focus my thoughts and imagination on the experiences of people who have just lived through a devastating earthquake, war, fire, or disease, and if I vividly picture to myself how they are thinking and feeling and what their yearnings and most pressing needs are, there is a high probability that I will respond to their plight with actions that will be spontaneous, generous, and proportioned to their wants and needs. But if I am the kind of person who, in my habitual way of thinking, measures the catastrophes and crises affecting other people's lives in

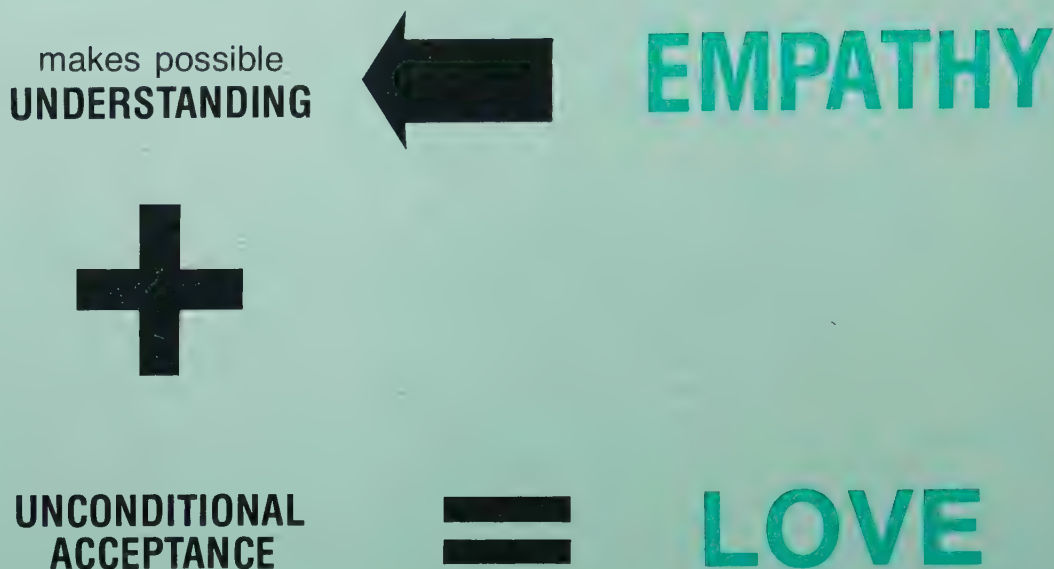
Sharing one's feelings with an empathic listener cannot help but elicit gradually an attitude of love

terms of numbers and theories instead of feelings and needs—in other words, if I think abstractly rather than in concrete, stark detail about what these victims are undergoing—this unempathic response will fail to move me into caring-giving action.

The more accurately people empathically perceive what is actually happening inside others who are poor, widowed, abandoned, oppressed, and the like and the more these same people use their imagination to picture concretely what a difference a contribution of time, effort, money, or some such gift could make toward improving distressed persons' life situations, the greater will be the probability that they will thereby be motivated to act caringly, or lovingly, in helpful ways. A good example is provided when a hospital or blood bank, in time of disaster, broadcasts an appeal for donations of fresh blood so that emergency surgery can be performed. Hearing an announcement on radio or television that merely conveys the message "200 pints are urgently needed" generally leaves the majority of potential donors in the community unmoved. Thinking about blood and a number of pints and people in an abstract fashion is not a deep enough reaction to prompt an immediate, self-sacrificing response.

If, however, you have ever seen a person hovering between life and death as a result of a severe hemorrhage—especially when it is an injured child—and if you have watched a transfusion of blood bring that person "back to life" in an almost miraculous way, then by vividly recalling in your imagination what a difference that donation of blood made and picturing what a comparable gift

LIFE-GIVING EQUATION



on your part might accomplish right now, it becomes difficult to ignore an appeal for blood, once you have heard it; it is likely to be impossible to say no. Again, in such an instance, empathic understanding of what another is experiencing contributes strongly as motivation toward an act of unselfish love.

EMPATHY HELPS DECISION MAKING

If young people could be enabled through education to carry in their minds, as a result of personal or vicarious experiences, inspiringly vivid and concrete images (of the "before and after" type) in relation to feeding the starving, healing the suffering, housing the homeless, instructing the ignorant, and enabling those who previously had no contact with the Good News to live with religious faith and hope of salvation, there would certainly be more of them preparing for deeply satisfying careers that involve dedicated, self-sacrificing service aimed at allaying the sufferings and deprivations of their brother and sister human beings. More would be choosing careers in nursing,

medicine, nutrition, farming, social work, religion, and the like so as to use their time, energies, and talents, not in affluent cities, but as missionaries do wherever the needs and afflictions of people are greatest, anywhere in the world.

In addition to motivating such (even lifelong) expressions of love, empathy is also related to love as an effect. Genuine affection for others often makes it possible for us to respond to them with empathy. If you encounter someone you love who is pleading for something to eat or drink, you almost automatically perceive accurately that person's hunger or thirst and reply spontaneously in deed. But let a shabby, unattractive, and unfamiliar beggar walk up to you on a crowded downtown street and importunately ask you for money to get something to eat or drink, your inclination will not be nearly as strong (unless you have developed the habit) to put yourself empathically inside that impoverished person's skin, feeling what he or she is experiencing, especially in the form of hunger pangs, thirsty dehydration, and inexpressible humiliation.

With intent and effort, the practice of repeatedly thinking and feeling empathically in encounters

with strangers can expand our habitual response from what Clark called "chauvinistic" to a universal form of empathy. Educating young people in high school, college, and university to use mind and heart imaginatively to experience (as if personally undergoing them) the yearnings, struggles, sufferings, and needs of people in all walks of life could result in more vocations to the priesthood and religious life, if these same young women and men could be taught at the same time to understand empathically the feelings of love, zeal, enthusiasm, and deep satisfaction that characterize the experience of fully committed, mature, and effective religious sisters and brothers and priests. Moreover, since empathy (as Rogers wrote) is an ability that is "caught" through observing those who demonstrate it rather than "taught" to the intellect, it is important that those who undertake the ministry of forming the character of future clergy and religious should have a broad enough experience of the world, of the conditions in which people struggle through life, and of the feelings and needs human beings experience so that they may develop to a high degree the gift of empathic understanding and can serve as models of this ability, particularly in their relationships and interactions with their students.

CONTEMPLATION REQUIRES EMPATHY

Finally, it would be a serious oversight to conclude this article without mentioning the insight Ignatius of Loyola had about the important role empathy plays in developing a love for God through the use of imaginative contemplative prayer. When he recommends, at the beginning of the Second Week of his *Spiritual Exercises*, that the persons praying should "ask for an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love and follow him better" and suggests that they use their imagination to meet Jesus personally in the events of his life, in order to make profound contact and to experience his thoughts, feelings, intentions, and motivations, in a gratitude-and-love-provoking way, Ignatius is certainly advocating an empathic approach to prayer, without of course employing the present-day term empathy. Not all individuals have equal capacity to be consistently empathic, but the *Exercises*, if made repeatedly during a series of years, can bring most people, with God's grace, to comprehend the experiences of the Lord and share them in such a way that gratitude, loyalty, and love are set ablaze, resulting in a desire to serve others, with him, for God's greater glory and the good of their souls.

Group encounter experiences, workshops on communication skills, and reading, seeing, or acting in plays such as *The Elephant Man*, *Medea*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, films like *Chariots of Fire* and *On Golden Pond*, novels of the caliber of *Gone With The Wind* and *Doctor Zhivago*, and operas as moving as

Feeling empathically in encounters with strangers can expand our habitual response to a universal form of empathy

Rigoletto and *Madame Butterfly* are all capable of providing helpful and at times powerful affective experiences to develop one's ability to understand with empathy the events that occur deep within the human person. These, together with contemplative prayer of the Ignatian type and the example of truly empathic mentors (whether they be teachers, leaders, spiritual directors, or counselors) can contribute readily available occasions for personal development of this priceless and useful gift.

I have tried to describe, in reply to the questions initially proposed, what empathy is, why it is important, and how it is developed. Much more could be written on the topic, and research into better ways of successfully developing this important human capacity certainly deserves to be pursued. Any competence as closely related to love as empathy merits more than research, however; it deserves to be recognized, admired, cherished, and developed to the highest degree possible—in everyone. The future of the world depends on it.

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WELL UNB

JAMES TORRENS, S.J.

We pupils widening upon the dark
or narrowing on an intense ray
like the oyster prizing its irritation—
how slim the range of our ease!

Reassurances swarm at our nosetip:
a bird truing its spring transversal
north, a frond unfolding to specification.
Each tiny life computes. Nothing to it!

But something stays beyond reach. We cup
ears like saucers into the unknown,
gathering its crackle. What news
there? That we are slim chances,

threads twisted thus and thus,
and unrecombinant. We tot the odds
like horse players with a racing form,
squinting to make them come out right.

Again, again, the heart, the unquiet mind
turns to You, wakeful one, secret
attraction. You alone brighten us wayward
pupils widening upon the dark.

I have lately taken to dropping the name of St. Augustine into conversation with my fellow Jesuits or lay Catholic friends. You should see the eyebrows rise! Haven't we had enough of him? Hasn't the church?

Why would I be stuck on Augustine, when so

many cases can be made against him? There is the feminist case, the long memory that, with his mother's push, he sent his mistress of ten years packing from Italy back to Africa, only to take another and never, in his *Confessions*, to give us the first one's name. There is the theologian's lament that his rebound from pagan self-absorption led him to a notion of concupiscence that narrows St. Paul's concept of the *sarx* into a libido, a restless source of sexual stirrings against the control of reason. There is the Aristotelian's frown, occasioned by Augustine falling too hard for neo-Platonism and its schizophrenic split between the ideal plane, i.e., the realm of idea and spirit, and the material, i.e., the impure, fallen and sunken, and tenuously real. There is, finally, my own long memory of the sober religious cast, the blight on joyfulness, that seemed to hang over Belgium when I studied there, as if the *Augustinus* of Bishop Jansenius, with its view that human freedom needs to be mastered severely as by a strong horseman, was still the ruling text.

Despite all this, reading Augustine I find myself under the old spell of someone passionate about the truth. We cannot but attend, it is true, in an age of psychological finesse to the spectacle of conflicting home influences (lax and strict) and to his swing from Roman public life, self-indulgent and self-magnifying, to the christian community (just the opposite). Augustine is not a paradigm of the well-balanced man. But that is far from the whole story. We watch with fascination, at least I do, the fiery mind responding to issues and questionable teaching, the intensity of spirit. We find Augustine to be

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ALANCED

a preacher, systematic writer, and controversialist in what William James called "the strenuous mood." Says James, perhaps the first great psychologist of our era:

The capacity for the strenuous mood probably lies slumbering in every man, but it has more difficulty in some than in others in waking up. It needs the wilder passions to arouse it, the big fears, loves, and indignations; or else the deeply penetrating appeal of some one of the higher fidelities, like justice, truth, or freedom. (Address to the Yale Philosophical Club, 1891)

The truth, the one Word of Truth, was Augustine's galvanizing force. He has had to suffer greatly from his most single-minded interpreters—Michael Baius of Louvain, Calvin, Luther the Augustinian monk. These men concentrated so hard on a kind of grim sovereignty of grace that they lost Augustine's tonality, his insistence that God in his providence does not overpower our will, override our free choice, but rather draws us by delight. Augustine repeatedly states that our common purpose, our sole good, is enjoyment of God; Vernon Bourke capped his lifelong studies of Augustine by underlining this in his small treatise, *Joy in the Ethics of Augustine*. When he spoke of God attracting us by *delectatio*, delight, as in his commentary on John 6:44, Augustine, much more than the followers claiming his paternity, really meant it.

In short, Augustine is bigger than all the boxes we try to contain him in, and he bursts out of them, a passionate and exciting religious figure, whatever his limitations and warps. He dealt with subject matters still of immense importance to us, and though it is tempting to say he helps us keep the big insoluble questions open, the fine thing is that he would reject the word insoluble and any value

theory of mere questioning as "being open." He read scripture, studied, wrote, sent off letters, and preached tirelessly (with stenographers present, in the Roman fashion) out of immense confidence in the truth.

Augustine just plain appeals on numerous scores, many of them traceable to his sermons on the psalms and our Lord's nativity. He looks out continually on created beauty (how often the word is on his lips!), appreciative of the symmetry of bodily forms and sounds. But above all of the outspread heavens, he speaks in that affective language of his with a sense of praise drawn from the psalms, culminating all, it would seem, in that great outburst of Book Ten of *The Confessions*: "Late have I loved Thee, Beauty ever ancient and ever new." He looked, in fact, on the universe, the race of humans, and our powers of understanding as quite miraculous.

The amplitude, or scope, of Augustine comes out in his vision of the City of God, not just as a speculative or strategic concept but as a vibrant image of aspiration for a common life, whose hidden beginnings took the empire of Rome as their host organism. With his talent for friendship, Augustine first formed a philosophical community around him, then a convert community, then an urban monastery that left its rule and stamp on religious life for centuries, and eventually, with many of his early friends, an episcopal body for northwest Africa.

Those with strong misgivings about the church as institution can get some help from Augustine. The words Jerusalem or Mount Sion appearing in the psalms stirred him to discourse on the holy people whom Christ hiddenly as well as openly forms about himself. Sermons on Psalms 26, 42, 113, and 140 abound in passages about "the whole

**Augustine
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Christ”—Jesus “concorporating” us with himself so that we may justly be called “Christ.” This came of his meditations on St. Paul; it contributed richly to the theology of the Mystical Body. How feelingly Augustine speaks of the church! “Our Catholic mother is herself a shepherd; she seeks the straying sheep everywhere. . . . They may not know one another, but she knows them all” (Sermon on Pastors).

The conversion of Augustine, his adherence to “this Word without which human eloquence is speechless,” came as a watershed in the history of oral and written style, a chastening of ornament by subject, i.e., the Incarnation. The lowliness of our Lord’s birth and passion—his birth particularly, with the Lord “appearing small to the small, but humble to the proud” (Sermon XI on the

Nativity)—helped him hit a new balance, a joining of the simple and direct with the sublime. *Sermo humilis* the historians of rhetoric have called it. He remained expansive and allegorical (to get to the spiritual marrow of events) and heavy on scripture. Yet he is also personal and full of feeling, of fire.

I perceive Augustine to be close, breathing on us still, urging us “to concentrate our whole soul with all the ardor we can upon what we touch with our mind” (“On Free Choice,” #41), when the divine illumination makes it possible to know. The untiring polemics of Augustine against the Roman pagans, the Manicheans, the Donatists, the Pelagians, even St. Jerome when Augustine thought him veering from the truth may seem preposterously far from our own battles to defend life against dictatorships or abortion or the bomb that would cancel us all out and our battles against overconsumption and for the progress of peoples in every category. Where does he enter?

Augustine connects with us by pursuing the hunt for God, of course, but also by reason of the years he labored to sketch out his vision of the City of God forming itself amidst the sexual license, vain ambition, and cruelty of declining Rome, an unredeemed world as familiar as our own daily newspaper. (Augustine, after all, saw the first Vandals arrive.) His sense of humanity as flawed, pervaded by original sin, challenges at every step the old Enlightenment persuasion that on our own, as effects of our planning, good judgment, and initiatives, we can change the world. “What!” he would no doubt say, “Make Egypt cease to be Egypt?!”

Do not be surprised, Augustine pretty much tells us, at the unyielding stubbornness of evil situations, the greed and earthly mindedness of leaders, oppressive environments, and whatever is baffling and intractable in yourself. Classic balance? If you are one of the very lucky ones. But do not lose sight of the cross as our one saving sign and source of self-understanding. Take encouragement from me. I wrote my *Confessions*, scars and warps and all, because people were starting to put me on a pedestal. And keep turning toward the True One.

Book Reviews

A Letter of Consolation, by Henri Nouwen, J. M. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982. 96 pp. \$6.95.

This is a small book prompted by personal tragedy and presented in an intensely personal and moving style. It is a single, long letter written by Father Nouwen several months after his mother's death. It is addressed to his father in Holland and is shared by both of them in the hope that it might touch others "who have known the same darkness and are searching for the same light."

This is an intimate letter that is as remarkable for the glimpse it offers into the truly extraordinary relationship between one father and son as it is for its poignant and penetrating insights into the christian experience of death. There are neither theological discourses nor many explicitly psychological insights; it is simply the very moving record of the obvious warmth, respect, and love of two men as they interpret the meaning of their lives now touched by the death of someone so much a part of their experience of faith. As is the case with so many of Father Nouwen's books, however, deceptively simple and pointed comments scattered throughout the text bear witness to his remarkable pastoral sensitivity and psychological integrity.

Father Nouwen is at his best as he describes how the experience of death simplifies. "Death does not tolerate endless shadings and nuances. Death lays bare what really matters, and in this way becomes your judge." What really matters in a christian experience of death is that we learn better what it really means to live. We learn that all living requires dying; all mortification—literally, "making death"—is not a perverse, masochistic relic of baroque piety but an invitation to become detached enough to be truly autonomous and capable of genuine surrender to life. Those who can in healthy and mature ways surrender to the unknown, to life, to the future, to death, are the truly autonomous,

creative, and free men and women of faith. To illustrate this thesis, Father Nouwen gently—and even prayerfully—explores the events of the Paschal Mystery in both scriptural and liturgical settings. Indeed, the entire letter is written during a Holy Week experience with the Trappists of Genesee Abbey.

Father Nouwen is himself a pastoral psychologist and therefore sensitive to the dangers that overintellectualized and pseudospiritual "solutions" can pose. His own letter could be hastily read in such a manner. It is obvious, however, that the author can presume the requisite psychological and spiritual maturity in the original reader, his father, whereas he can only hope for such in subsequent readers. This is a serious and hard piece, at times uncomfortably so. There are, I suspect, several levels on which it can be read. Some might be more dangerous psychologically and spiritually than others; this is not intended as a pious or facile gloss on genuine human suffering. It is thoroughly reality oriented, and given this most mature and complex reading, it is a worthy addition to pastoral literature.

—John Allan Loftus, S.J., Ph.D.

Alcohol Problems and Alcoholism, by James E. Royce. New York: The Free Press, 1981. 383 pp. \$16.95.

James Royce is a Jesuit priest, Senior Professor of Psychology, and Director of the Alcohol Studies Program at Seattle University. His earlier publications are *Personality and Mental Health*, *Man and His Nature*, and *Man and Meaning*. For more than thirty years he has been counseling alcoholics and their spouses.

In the preface of his latest book Royce says, "There does not seem to be any general survey of the whole field (alcohol and alcoholism) that is suitable as a college textbook or any integrated formulation by a single author that provides the

general reader with an overall, balanced understanding. This book is an attempt to fill that double need." The result is a well written, comprehensive, and extensively referenced volume that will be an excellent textbook.

The material is presented in four parts that are further subdivided into twenty-one chapters. Under the heading of alcohol, he examines concepts such as drinking, drunkenness, alcoholism, the scope of the problem, the sociocultural aspects, how the body handles alcohol, and behaviors induced by alcohol. Part II treats the patterns of alcoholism, special groups, the family's reaction, the multifactorial causes, and the disease concept of alcoholism. The next part deals with prevention, intervention, and referral. The point is made that forced treatment does work with alcoholics. In the final part, which presents treatment and rehabilitation, there are chapters on Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Alateen, the spiritual needs of the alcoholic, the training of the alcoholism worker, and several others.

Royce presents many facts, pertinent comments, and bits of wisdom that are worth remembering. Some examples:

- Even our jokes betray a certain uneasiness and a mixed attitude about drinking
- In 1935 Dr. Bob and Bill W., the founders of AA, discovered they could stay sober by helping others and following a twelve-step program
- Between five and ten percent of the circulating blood alcohol is excreted unmetabolized in the breath, perspiration, and urine
- Women need good role models at all levels to motivate recovery
- The research of Dr. Joan Jackson shows that, although a minority of wives of alcoholics may marry because of unconscious neurotic needs, the majority had normal personalities at the time of marriage, and the neurotic behavior was a reaction to living with alcoholism rather than a cause of alcoholism
- Alcoholism is now seen as an illness to be understood and treated rather than punished
- Business needs to show employees that alcohol is not necessary for success in jobs such as selling
- Total abstinence is the only sensible goal to be proposed to clients, given the nature of the illness
- Alcoholics Anonymous is a self-help group that combines many facets of good group therapy. For lasting results, treatment requires at least one year
- Loneliness has been defined as being alone with oneself, whereas solitude is being alone with God
- Starting at the grass roots level, a movement has spread throughout more than half the states toward the development of professional standards for alcoholism workers, along with a means for certifying that one has met these standards.

This is not the sort of book one reads from cover to cover in one sitting. Nonetheless, it is a quite readable book. Its systematic coverage of the whole field makes it a valuable text for use in the college classroom or in a wide variety of training centers. There is some repetition from chapter to chapter, but this seems to be intended as a teaching device—the technique one would expect of a good teacher in the classroom. One of the outstanding features of the book is the wealth of references, those ending each chapter as well as the general bibliography. This is a valuable addition to the extensive educational literature on alcoholism available today.

—John T. Murray, S.J., M.D.

The Priest and Stress, by the Bishops' Committee on Priestly Life in Ministry. Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1982. 26 pp. \$1.25.

This recent publication by the Bishops' Committee is a concise, easy-to-read, straightforward presentation on a topical issue. The Committee has incorporated a great deal of useful material into this booklet of modest size. They put the entire work into perspective when they say:

If the priest takes time for his health so that he might extend his life for the Lord's service, so that he might bring greater energy and enthusiasm into his ministry, so that he might bring greater patience and joy to his work with his people, then that time is well spent.

The writers selected six areas to highlight: general environment; expectations and demands; lack of recognition and support; neglect of physical health; neglect of emotional health; and difficulties with spirituality. In my own experience of working with priests, I find that these seem to be a good representation of the primary sources of stress in the lives of priests today.

The sources of stress are presented in a way that is certain to help the individual priest understand himself and realize the universality of what he is experiencing. The booklet will also aid him to become more aware of the fact that the task of coping with stress is not something confined to priests but is a current problem being faced by most people in helping professions.

In the section on responding to stress, the Committee not only challenges the priest to accept

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greater personal responsibility for his own life but also offers a strong array of recommendations to those in positions of authority.

Although the booklet is specifically written for the priest, it is equally useful for anyone involved in ministry. Moreover, the footnotes help to direct the interested reader to the most recent articles and books written on the topic. But I believe that readers could have benefited immensely if the Committee had added a discussion guide to focus individual reflection and group discussion. Perhaps in later editions they could do so.

—Loughlan Sofield, S.T.

Religion and Pain, by Joseph H. Fichter. New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981. 143 pp. \$9.95.

The author, Professor of Sociology at Loyola University of New Orleans, describes this work as a sociological investigation into cultural patterns and social roles. He studies questions such as: What do christian health professionals do in the name of religion to comfort the afflicted, to bring the consolations of religion to people on their sick bed? What kind of religious response do christian believers make to the sickness and suffering of their fellow human beings? What is the spiritual dimension of health care and how does it enter into the remedial treatment of patients? Does modern medical practice take seriously the holistic approach to illness, which includes the spiritual as well as the physical, psychological, and social aspects of the human personality?

Data for the study were obtained by questionnaires sent to every other general hospital listed in Kenedy's *Official Catholic Directory*. Usable answered questionnaires were returned by 92.3% of the 325 hospitals. The author indicates that the qualitative interpretation of the questionnaire data was greatly enhanced by means of observation and interviews and by a thorough search of the contemporary literature dealing with the spiritual dimensions of health care. Extensive footnotes reflect the scholarly review of the literature.

In assessing the secular response to pain the author observes that the *Accreditation Manual* of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals (1980) makes no mention of pastoral care or of the spiritual dimension of the healing process. It is noted, however, that church-related hospitals, while seeking accreditation from the JCAH, also follow additional criteria written into the constitutions of the Protestant Hospital Association and of the Catholic Health Association.

A great majority of the health professionals responding (91%) agreed that "faith in God lessens

the fears and anxieties of the suffering person," but only 39% agreed that "the more religious a person is, the more able he or she is to endure suffering." Concerning the rejection of pain, the author notes the probable influence of pentecostal christians who insist that "God does not want you to hurt." It is noted that in the Catholic charismatic movement more than one third (37%) of the prayer groups had experienced a physical healing among the members.

Fichter concludes that the more religious a person is or has been during the course of life, the more likely he or she is to turn to God in times of serious illness. The patient who has previously paid little attention to religion will not pray to God. The hypothesis that strong religious faith makes it somewhat easier for the patient to endure pain was not confirmed by the health professionals in the hospitals surveyed. There is strong evidence that pain may be a hindrance rather than an aid in developing a religious response. Although hospital personnel generally believe that when sick people are anxious and fearful they are strengthened by the consolations of religion, there are instances when the opposite occurs. The immediate effect of intense pain seems to preoccupy patients with themselves and their own troubles. The greater the pain, the less likely are such patients to be fresh and alert, able to carry on a conversation with a chaplain, ready to pray and meditate.

This work includes a historical perspective that traces the growth of hospitals over the centuries and the changing nature and emphases of these institutions sponsored by the christian community. The role of religious women, especially nurses, is developed. The question is studied as to whether modern American health care has lessened its spiritual motivation even in the church-related facilities. Health care personnel were in agreement that the lack of spiritual orientation is a professional deficiency. The author concludes, however, that most nurses are very sensitive to the spiritual needs of their patients. Textbooks used in nursing schools usually devote a chapter to this aspect of health care, but this is not the case with medical school texts.

The author states that the Catholic Health Association prefers that medical social workers take their graduate studies and professional training at church-related universities. This reviewer would argue that all social workers, indeed all health care personnel, need knowledge about and skill in working with the spiritual aspects of their patients' lives. When the health care personnel were asked if they considered their own work at the hospital as a spiritual ministry to the sick, about seven out of ten of the lay women nurses saw spiritual ministry as essential to their work. The proportion of physicians making this response, however, was below 60%.

It is only in chapter 6 that Fichter says that the

central thrust of this study is to test the generalization that medicine has divorced itself from religion completely and instead has allied itself to scientific methodology. He points out that, whereas hospitals in the past were mainly established as a result of religious motivation, the modern medical center has a large laboratory and a small chapel. There is no direct measure from the study of the personal piety or religious devotion of the respondents. However, 87% denied that their faith in God is weakened in the face of suffering. Furthermore, some persons interviewed stated that their faith was strengthened by contact with the sick and suffering. Others said a strong religious faith is necessary to overcome the emotional stress of the hospital ministry. Concerning prayer, seven out of ten nurses pray for their patients; less than six out of ten physicians do so. Physicians were found to be only half as likely (36%) as lay women nurses (76%) to report that they sometimes pray with the sick patient. Social workers were the least likely among the hospital personnel to say that they pray with and for the sick patients.

A separate chapter is devoted to sisters and nurses. The author notes that in every large diocese of the country there is a variety of institutions to carry on the corporal works of mercy, to promote both evangelization and social justice. He observes that none of these apostolic ministries could continue to function successfully if there were not a large number of conscientious and trained women available. Almost two thirds (64%) of the respondents to this study were female. In discussing the numerical decline of women religious, Fichter finds that among his respondents from church-related hospitals, about three out of ten (28%) have no sisters at all in the role of bedside nursing. In discussing non-sister nurses, Fichter predicts that hospitals will become more and more a ministry of the laity and that these are the people who must be the chief witnesses to christian values.

The controversy revolving around the nature of the training in clinical pastoral education is discussed. The central issue is whether programs are too psychologically versus spiritually oriented. The fact that there is a parallel system of training for Protestant and Catholic chaplains is treated. The emerging roles for sisters and laity in pastoral care is discussed. Concerning the spiritual ministry of a clergywoman, it is noted that the first qualification to be a Catholic chaplain, as established by the National Association of Catholic Chaplains, is "ordination to the priesthood and continuing ecclesiastical endorsement by the Ordinary of the Diocese or one's religious superior." Interestingly, Fichter concludes that "until the sacerdotal ordination of women is introduced by the Catholic Church, this primary qualification clearly excludes religious Sisters, or any other women, from becoming full-fledged hospital chaplains." In discussing relations with medical staff, the chapter concludes by stating

that the general opinion seems to be that the nurses are the "key people" in the care of sick patients.

In the concluding chapter, Fichter confronts the reader by saying that the purpose of apostolic activities is to "fulfill the mission of the pilgrim church to communicate Christ's message through a community of service. It must be understood, then, that the organized religious response to human pain and suffering is a means of bringing God to people and people to God. Medical care, nursing service, comforting the afflicted—none of these can be an end in itself." In summing up, he notes that the respondents to this survey of hospital personnel insist that a spiritual perspective is an essential characteristic of the health care professional. Nine out of ten respondents, including physicians, nurses, and social workers, agree also that "the holistic approach in modern health care has to include spiritual ministration to patients." The author concludes, however, that at the present time spiritual values are secondary to the advanced technical status of hospitals. The challenge to religious faith is that spiritual motivation be at the basis of professional responsibility and that the spiritual dimension of health care be taken seriously in the ministry to the sick.

Fichter has succeeded in conducting a study that enlightens and challenges those who are professionally concerned with creating a society in which the spiritual component is recognized as an integral facet of comprehensive health care. This work starkly illuminates the extent to which church-sponsored social institutions are heavily dominated by the prevailing secular culture. This study challenges the christian community to reexamine the *raison d'etre* of its health care institutions. Unless the values of the christian community can be an integral part of its health care programs and unless personnel functioning in these programs are operationalizing the values of a christian perspective, there may be reason to question the continuation of this investment. Fichter deserves thanks for a thought-provoking work.

—Daniel E. Jennings, D.S.W.

Dr. Jennings is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Conference of Catholic Charities and Secretary-Treasurer of the National Conference of Deans of Graduate Schools of Social Work. He is a member of the editorial board of *Social Thought*. He is also Dean and Professor of Social Work, at University of Houston Graduate School of Social Work, Texas.

Local Community Evaluation

Among the letters to the editor received during recent weeks was one that conveyed a request from Sister Mary Caplice, associate to the provincial of the Congregation de Notre Dame, Ridgefield, Connecticut. She stated, "I am writing to request that an article or series of articles be presented in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT in regard to annual evaluation of local communities.

"Communities are looking for practical approaches to evaluation for growth. I'm hoping that the authors of your book *Inside Christian Community* would have suggestions to offer."

Members of our editorial board have suggested that we ask Sister Rosine Hammett, C.S.C., and Brother Loughlan Sofield, S.T., who wrote the very popular book Sister Caplice mentioned, to respond to her request. But they also reminded us that there may be a number of our readers who are regularly using or experimenting with some particular mode of conducting an annual, or perhaps less frequent, evaluation of their community. The board members recommended that we ask such readers to send us an outline and comments on their practice in this regard so that we can gather together the replies and present them in the form of the article (or several) that Sister Caplice has requested.

So, please write to us, if you are making evaluations of your local community on some regular basis. You will be helping other communities all over the world.

The Editors

Criteria of Emotional Maturity

Having the ability to deal constructively
with reality

Having the capacity to adapt to change

Having a relative freedom from symptoms that
are produced by tensions and anxieties

Having the capacity to find more satisfaction
in giving than receiving

Having the capacity to relate to other people
in a consistent manner with mutual satisfaction
and helpfulness

Having the capacity to sublimate, to direct one's
instinctive hostile energy into creative and
constructive outlets

Having the capacity to live.

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